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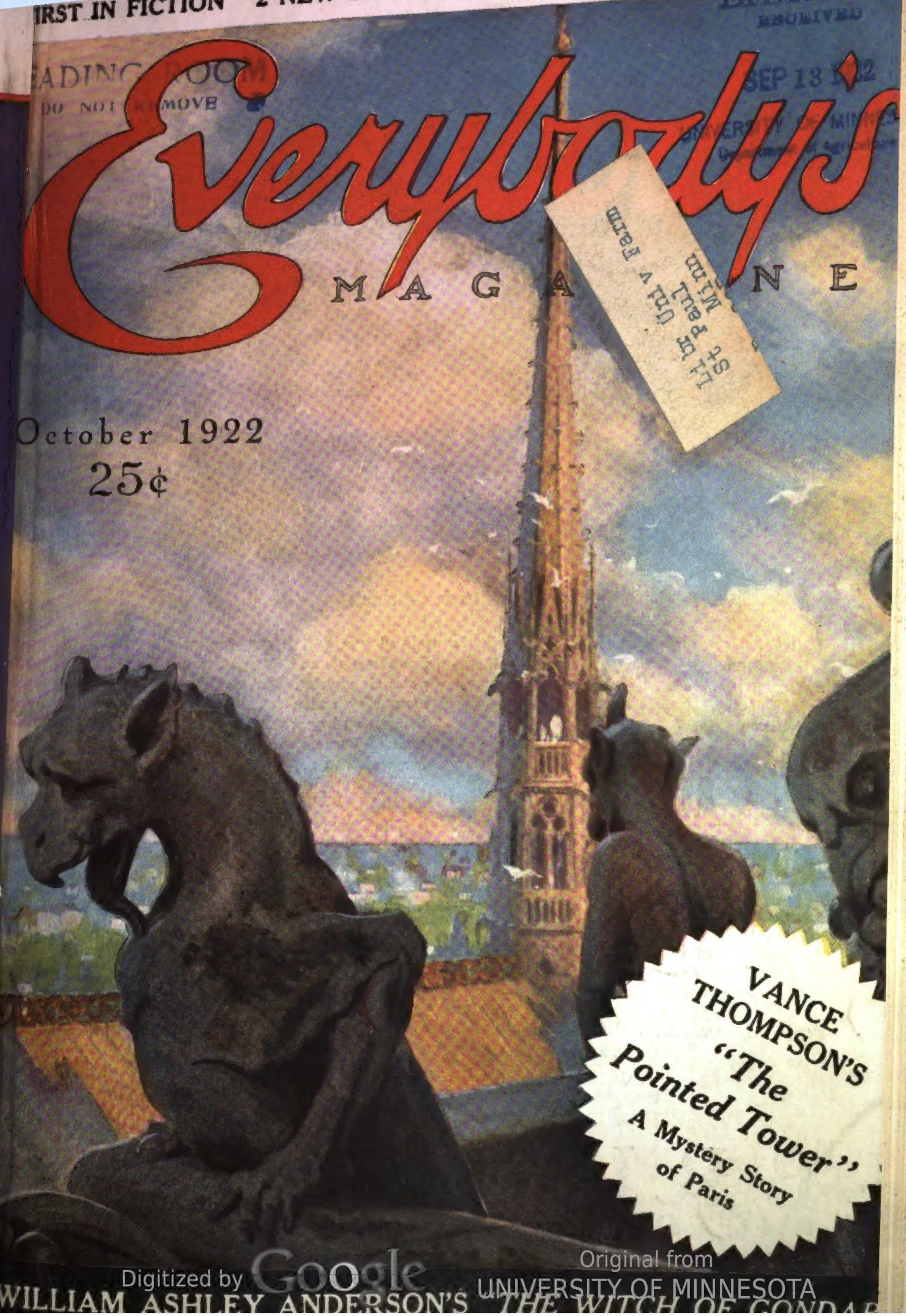
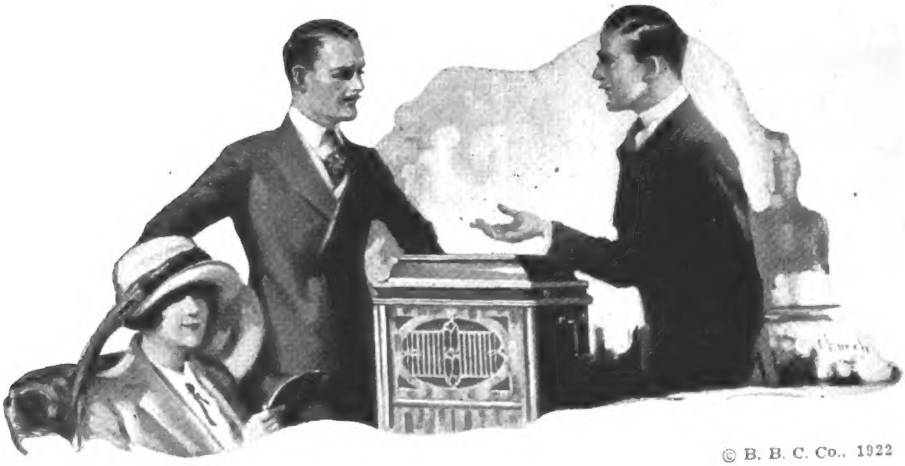


VANCE THOMPSON'S
"The Pointed Tower",
A Mystery Story
of Paris

WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON'S "THE WITCH OF GONDA



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The Soprano High "C" and Piano Tone Tests

Which instantly reveal the musical value of a phonograph

How to make them

This is to urge you to make a simple tone test, before purchasing a phonograph.

Ask to hear a soprano record played. Then a piano record.

This is why:

The two most difficult tones to reproduce are high soprano and piano notes. Musicians, critics and teachers all will tell you this.

Note how most instruments vibrate when the higher notes are reached. Mark how "metallic" a piano record sounds on an ordinary instrument.

Then hear the same records on a Brunswick. And you will know why foremost musical authorities, both in Europe and America, have chosen The Brunswick for their own homes.

And you will know, too, why such famed artists as Richard Strauss, Leopold Godowsky, Claire Dux, Huberman, Ney and a score of other great concert and operatic stars of the New Hall of Fame have chosen Brunswick for which to record, exclusively.

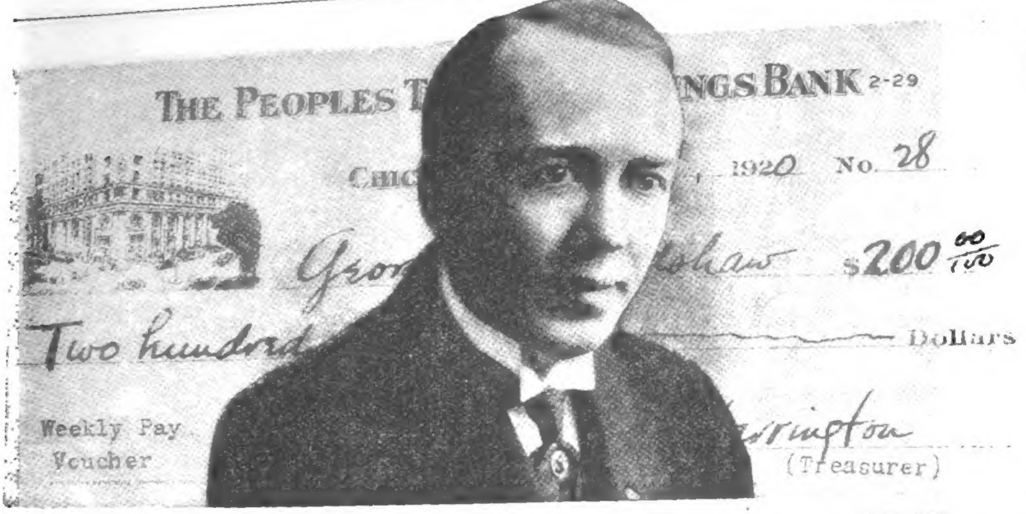
Plays all records

The Brunswick Phonograph plays *all* makes of records. Hence all artists, no matter for which make of records they record, come into the home where there is a Brunswick. And Brunswick Records play on any phonograph.

Hear. Compare. Your nearest Brunswick dealer will gladly give a demonstration.

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER CO.
Manufacturers—Established 1845
CHICAGO NEW YORK CINCINNATI TORONTO

BRUNSWICK
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS



An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn $10,000 a Year

Let Me Show You How FREE

TO the average man the $10,000-a-year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five-figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the $10,000-a-year class.

There is nothing "different" about the man whose salary runs into five figures. He is made of the same stuff as you and I. For example, take J. P. Overstreet, of Denison, Texas. A few short years ago he was a police officer earning less than $1,000 a year. Today his earnings are in excess of $1,000 a month—more than $12,000 a year. C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa., was formerly a railroad employe on a small salary—last month his earnings were $1,562.

Read These Amazing Stories of Success

Earned $524 in Two Weeks

I had never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218. You have done wonders for me.—Geo. W. Kearns, Oklahoma City, Okla.

I Now Earn as High as $100 a Day

I took your course two years ago. Was earning $15 a week clerking. Am now selling many of the largest firms in the U. S. I have earned more than $100 in a day. You secured me my position. Our Sales Manager is a graduate of yours.—J. L. De Bonis, Chicago, Ill.

Earns $1,562 in Thirty Days

My earnings for the past thirty days are $1,562.00, and I won Second Prize in March, although I only worked two weeks during that month.—C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

Earned $1,800 in Six Weeks

My earnings for March were over $1,000 and over $1,800 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were $356.00. I travel eleven months out of the year, working 5 days each week.

The N. S. T. A. dug me out of a rut where I was earning less than $1,000 a year and showed me how to make a success.—J. P. Overstreet, Denison, Texas.

Why Don't YOU Get Into The Selling Field?

Mr. Overstreet, Mr. Campbell, and the others whose letters you see on this page are all successful salesmen. They have stepped into the $10,000-a-year class—and they never sold goods before! It is hard to believe that such big success could come so quickly and easily. Yet it was all amazingly simple! Ask them the secret of their sudden success. They will tell you they owe it to the National Salesmens Training Association. This is an organization of top-notch salesmen and sales managers, formed expressly for the purpose of training men to sell and helping them to good selling positions. It has taken hundreds of men from all walks of life and made them Master Salesmen—it has lifted them out of the rut and shown them the way to magnificent earnings, to fascinating careers and big selling positions.

We Train You And Help You Land A Job

What these men have done, you can do! In your spare time at home you can easily master the secrets of selling that make Star Salesmen. Whatever your experience has been—whatever you may be doing now—whether or not you think you can sell—just answer this question: Are you ambitious to earn $10,000 a year? Then send me your name quick! I will prove to you without cost or obligation that you can easily become a Star Salesman. I will show you how the Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service of the N. S. T. A. will help **you** to wonderful success in Selling.

Free Book on Salesmanship

Just mail the coupon or write for our great illustrated Book, "Modern Salesmanship," which we will send you Free. Let us prove to you that regardless of what you are doing now you can quickly become a Star Salesman. Let us show you how you, too, can step into the ranks of the big money makers of business. See how easily you can learn this fascinating, big-pay profession at home in your spare time. Learn what we have done for others and what we stand ready to do for you. Don't put it off until tomorrow—write us today. Mail the coupon at once.

National Salesmens Training Association
Dept. 74-R, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

National Salesmens Training Association
Dept. 74-R, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your free book, "Modern Salesmanship," and full information about the N. S. T. A. system of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service. Also a list showing lines of business with openings for salesmen.

Name ....

Street ....

City .... State ....

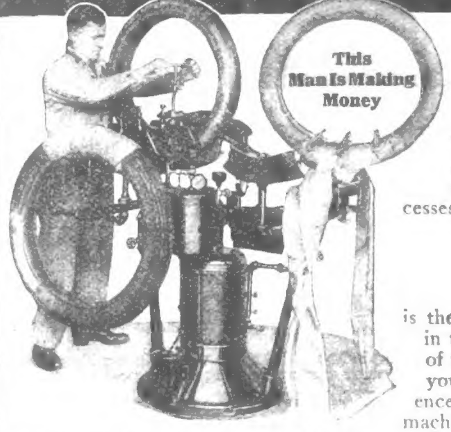
Age .... Occupation ....

EVERYBODY'S
October 1922

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume XLVII
Number 4

One Man and This Machine Can Earn $500 a Month


This Man Is Making Money

FIVE hundred dollars month is low estimate. Many make **more**. Gibbard, Mich., had amazing record of $60,000.00 last year! Others had wonderful successes. My new **Tire Surgery** machine did the trick!

HAYWOOD'S TIRE SURGERY

is the new and better tire repair method. You can learn in two weeks. I'll teach you. I'll furnish you with one of these new, compact **Tire Surgery** outfits. Will place you on direct road to fortune and financial independence. Your determination to succeed and this wonderful machine is all you need.

Experience Not Necessary

To **start** is the thing! Haywood's easy **Tire Surgery** method and Haywood's "One Man" machine will do the rest. Will make money for you—lots of it—from very beginning. Charlie Evans of Indiana, carpenter, past middle age, **knew nothing** of tires less than year ago. He bought a Haywood machine. Learned **Tire Surgery**. **Now** is earning more than $100 week.

Opportunity Never Better

Seven million car owners in country. Most of them **must** economize. Can't buy new tires. Must make old tires do. They can tinker with their auto, but can't mend tires. This work will swamp present **Tire Surgery** stations. Many more needed in every section of United States.

I Can Place 500 Men in Good Locations Right Now!

It's a proposition **you** can handle. Cash in on this great **economic wave** that is sweeping old tires into repair shops instead of junk piles: Etzrodt of Pennsyl- vania averages $30,000 in this business. Blair of Ohio does more than $100 daily with small **Tire Surgery** shop. Oldham of Illinois reports recent earnings of $2200 in four months. And so on. These men **acted**. They had no experience. Possessed very little capital. Enjoyed no advantages you haven't got.

M. HAYWOOD, Pres.
HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT CO.
958 Capitol Avenue **Indianapolis, Ind.**

$6000.00 Year Easy

Haywood's **Tire Surgery** is so successful—so profitable—because it is thoroughly efficient. Look at the machine. See how compact and complete it is. Whole plant can be placed in space eight feet square. Observe its convenience—how **one man** can easily watch every detail from steam plant to vulcanizing without turning head. Look at its capacity—think of the dollars it will pour into your pockets in one single day. Its operation is so simple **any man** can do **perfect work** without long experience or apprenticeship.

Fill Out Coupon Now!

I have ready to mail you, the day I get your request, a fascinating book which tells all about tires. How to repair them by the Haywood method of **Tire Surgery**. How to start in business. How to build up trade. What to charge. You needn't write a letter. Just tear out the coupon right now. Fill it in and mail. Within 48 to 72 hours you can have the whole proposition before you. It's a case of walking right into $3000 to $6000 a year. Use the coupon below.

Send for Free Book

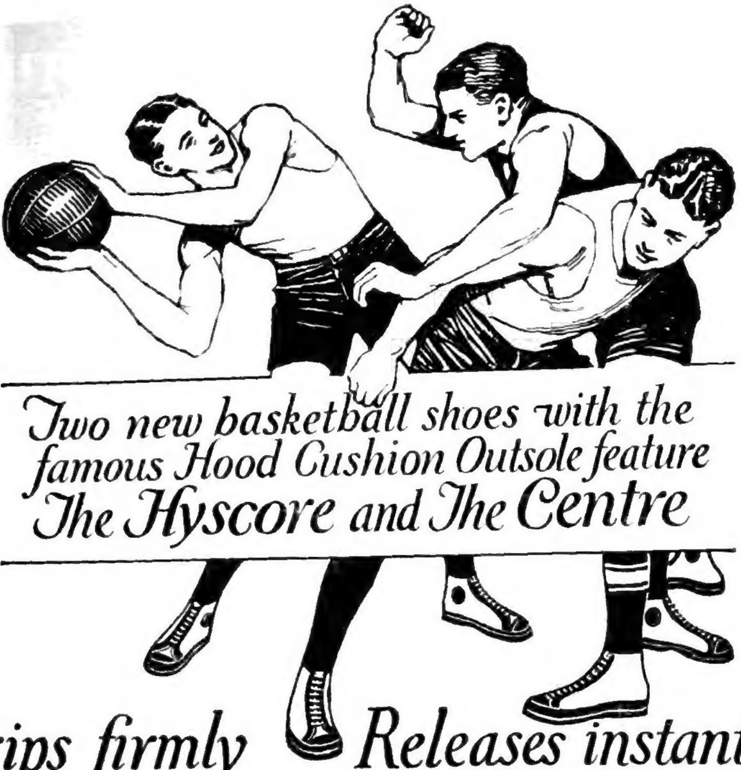
M. Haywood, Pres.
HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT CO.
958 Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

Dear Sir: Please send me by return mail your free book on the new Haywood Tire Surgery method and the details of this profitable business.

Name ....

Address ....

....



Two new basketball shoes with the famous Hood Cushion Outsole feature The Hyscore and The Centre

Grips firmly Releases instantly

Plays a fast, sure game

Modern Basketball has needed just these shoes. It is a game where speed and accuracy in footwear count large. Some shoes, designed to grip firmly, release with just enough tardiness to slow down a fast game. Other shoes which release quickly do not provide quite the confidence in the grip. The specially constructed Hood outsole will grip firmly and release instantly—the two requirements for super-footwork in basketball. The Hyscore is built and reinforced to stand up under a long hard schedule. The Centre is lighter in construction, which to many is a point in its favor, and will stand up under the ordinary schedule. The Centre is also a splendid all-round gym shoe.

Hyscore

The Bayside Baysides are today, and have been for years, the most popular, low priced *shoe* for school calisthenics, light gymnasium and track work. A satisfactory shoe, giving splendid value. Baysides are also used extensively in women's classes in schools and gymnasiums. Made in the oxford or high pattern, and in black, brown and white.

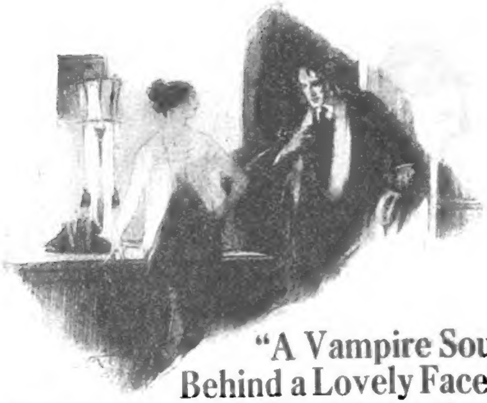
HOOD RUBBER PRODUCTS CO., INC.
Watertown, Mass.

Centre

CANVAS HOOD FOOTWEAR

HOOD

Send for Special Athletic Bulletin 'A'



"A Vampire Soul Behind a Lovely Face"

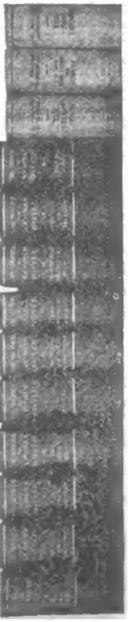
SHE summoned her fiancé to her home in the night. She sent him away a raving maniac, loving her fiercely yet transfixed with horror at the very thought of her. A long convalescence and blessed forgetfulness! Suddenly he senses her malignant will. It leads him screaming into the darkness of the night. Why did men love this exquisite woman up to the eve of the wedding, and then, at a word from her, go mad? The mystery grips you—it is a mystery such as comes only from the pen of the greatest of mystery writers,

A. CONAN DOYLE

Did you know Doyle has a book for every mood? You may fight beside Sir Nigel or share the business villainies of Ezra Girdlestone. In Fly Trap Gulch the huge man-eating plant awaits you; you are among the Nihilists; you are in Sassassa Valley with the fiend of a single eye. One of the world's greatest love stories is Doyle's and one of the most stirring prize-fight tales. Fiction enough to last a year; and the Sherlock Holmes stories besides—all beautiful volumes. If you act at once they are yours, and you will get absolutely

Free—Six Wonderful Novels by E. Phillips Oppenheim

Master of the International Intrigue Story



For a few days only, those who send in the coupon, will receive free with the Doyle, in three compact volumes, six complete, stirring novels of E. Phillips Oppenheim—the master of amazing adventure in international intrigue, of weird situations in underworld and palace, of pathetic loves and struggles among shifting scenes. Both Oppenheim and Doyle fascinate, grip the imagination, bring quick complete relaxation from every-day cares because they have been written, not to moralize or teach, but to bring pleasure. These six novels, costing $12 when purchased in bookstores, are given away with the Doyle: Master of Men, The Great Awakening, To Win the Love He Sought, The Yellow House, The New Tenant, A Daughter of Astrea.

Send No Money—Just the Coupon

Thousands will read this offer. Some will act promptly. Others will say too late: "I might have owned these two fine sets, if only I had not waited too long." Don't have useless regrets. The two sets will come to you at once for free examination. Send no money; merely clip the coupon now.

P. F. COLLIER & SON COMPANY
Mail Order Dept., 416 W. 13th St., New York

Send me on approval, charges paid by you, Conan Doyle's works in ten volumes, gold stamped. Also the three-volume set of Oppenheim bound in cloth. If I keep the books I will remit $1.00 within a week and $3.00 a month for eight months for the Conan Doyle set only, and retain the Oppenheim set without charge. Otherwise, I will, within a week, return both sets at your expense. For the Conan Doyle, beautifully bound in three-quarter leather, simply add three more monthly payments; that is, eleven instead of eight.

Check binding desired. *Cloth* ☐ ¾ *Leather* ☐

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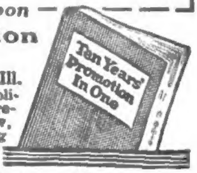

Ten Years' Promotion In One

LaSalle Extension University
Dept. 1043-R Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Send without obligation to me information regarding course indicated below, also copy of your interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One."

- ☐ **Business Management**
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True-Tone
Saxophone

Easiest of all wind instruments to play and one of the most beautiful. You can learn the scale in an hour's practice and play popular music in a few weeks. You can take your place in a band within 90 days, if you desire. Unrivalled for home entertainment, church, lodge or school. In big demand for orchestra dance music.

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Saxophone Book Free After nearly 300 years' supremacy, string instruments are almost entirely displaced by Saxophones in all nationally popular orchestras. Our Free Saxophone Book tells which Saxophone takes violin, cello and bass parts and many other things you would like to know. Ask for your copy. Mention the instrument interested in and a complete catalog will be mailed free. (59)

BUESCHER BAND INSTRUMENT CO.
Makers of Everything in Band and Orchestra Instruments
1659 Buescher Block ELKHART, INDIANA

Sax Invented the Saxophone
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Rooms with hot and cold running water $2 UP

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As well as service à la carte

Music During Luncheon, Dinner and Supper

STOP FORGETTING

Systemize Your Mind

Good memory is absolutely essential to success. I will send you **Free** my Copyrighted Memory and Concentration Test, illustrated book, **How to Remember names, faces, studies—develop Will, Self-Confidence. Write today.**

Prof. Henry Dickson, Dept. 758, Evanston, Ill.

"I'm making real money now"

"SEE that coupon? Remember the day you urged me to send it to Scranton? It was the best thing I ever did.

"Mr. Carter called me in today. Said he'd been watching my work for some time—ever since he learned I was studying with the International Correspondence Schools.

"Then he asked me if I thought I could take over Bill Stevens' job. I told him I was sure that I could—that I had had that goal in view ever since I started my I. C. S. course.

"I start tomorrow, Mary, at an increase of $60 a month. It's wonderful how spare-time study helps a man to get ahead."

FOR thirty years, the I. C. S. has been helping men to win promotion, to earn more money, to get ahead in business and in life.

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best. Yes, you can.

All we ask is the chance to prove it. Without cost, without obligation, just mark and mail this coupon.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
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Without cost or obligation on my part, please send me full particulars about the subject before which I have marked an X in the list below:—

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☐ Advertising
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☐ Business English
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☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

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☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
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☐ Steam Engineering ☐ Radio
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Architect
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
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☐ Chemistry
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Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited Montreal, Canada.

Model 335 Stevens double-barrel shotgun. RETAIL PRICE, *including tax, $32.40. Other models $19.50 to $36.00.*

Stevens "Favorite". 24-in. take-down; .22 long rifle, .22 short, .25 Stevens and .32 long rim-fire. RETAIL PRICE, *including tax, $9.85. Other models ranging from $5.40 to $23.50.*

From grandfather to father — to son

For three generations Stevens has built shotguns and small bore rifles for the American sportsman.

For three generations the accuracy and endurance of Stevens guns have remained unsurpassed.

You can buy a more expensive gun than a Stevens; but you cannot buy better shooting qualities. *Shotgun or rifle—a Stevens firearm is accurate.*

When a Stevens barrel is bored or drilled, the final reaming cuts away *less than one-half of a thousandth of an inch.*

For rifling, Stevens uses a special process, slow scraping system removing *less than the thirtieth part of a thousandth of an inch* with each pass of the rifling cutter.

A slow method—but when finished a Stevens barrel is *accurate.*

When you buy a Stevens you are buying unexcelled shooting qualities and you are paying a reasonable price.

Stevens manufactures a complete line of small bore rifles and shotguns of every description. Ask at your dealer's or write for the interesting catalog describing in detail our complete line. Address:

J. STEVENS ARMS COMPANY
Department C119 — Chicopee Falls, Mass.

Owned and operated by the Savage Arms Corporation
Executive and Export Offices: 50 Church Street, New York

Stevens

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$
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Set Your Own Price On Your Services

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There is big money in the accountancy field. Thousands of accountants earn $4,000.00 a year and upwards, and the Journal of Accountancy (official organ of the American Institute of Accountants), says: "There are one hundred or more public accountants in the United States whose annual incomes exceed $100,000.00."

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Correspondence Instruction—also day and evening classes in Chicago and New York schools

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214-224 Massasoit Building - - Chicago

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal.

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STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made **self-adhesive** purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **No straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. **Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.** Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We **prove** it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE**

Write name on Coupon and send **TODAY**

PLAPAO CO. **633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.**

Name ....
Address..
Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao..........................

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A course of forty lessons in the history, form, structure and writing of the Short-Story, taught by Dr. J. Berg Esenwein, for years Editor of Lippincott's. *150-p. catalog free.* Please address

The Home Correspondence School
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CHALFONTE-HADDON HALL

ATLANTIC CITY

Combined in Ownership and Management

The beautiful new Boardwalk Wing of Haddon Hall is now open. It connects the original Haddon Hall with the artistic pavilions, restful ocean decks, court garden and sea rooms of the 1920 addition.

On many occasions in the past Chalfonte-Haddon Hall was unable to accommodate all of its many friends

The new Boardwalk Wing now makes possible the hospitable welcome of more than 1200 guests. While "old-fashioned" in its personal attention and service, Chalfonte-Haddon Hall has for more than fifty years kept abreast of the times in its modern facilities for pleasure, comfort and rest.

Attractive Souvenir Folder on Request

LEEDS and LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

On the Beach and the Boardwalk
American Plan. At your service
every day of the year

Big Money for Auto Experts

HARD times don't worry the Auto Expert. He is in constant demand. Did you ever know of an experienced auto engineer hunting a job? No, and you never will. The job hunts him.

Just consider for a moment that there are 9,000,000 automobiles in this country today. These millions of cars are in constant need for experts — repairmen and auto engineers.

A smattering knowledge won't get you very far in this line, but if you are willing to get down to brass tacks and really master this well paying line of work, then there will be no limit to what you can earn.

It is only one step from Auto Expert to Garage Owner, but think of the big money that is earned by the up-to-date garage. Here is your chance to become independent — to be your own boss with our help. Now don't say "Well, I'll think about it," but make up your mind right now to be a real success.

The coupon will give you full information on how to do it. Fill out and send it in right now while you are thinking about it.

American School
Dept. A-74, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

American School
Dept. A-74, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

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........Building Contractor
........Automobile Engineer
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........Machine Shop Practice
........Photoplay Writer
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........Shop Superintendent
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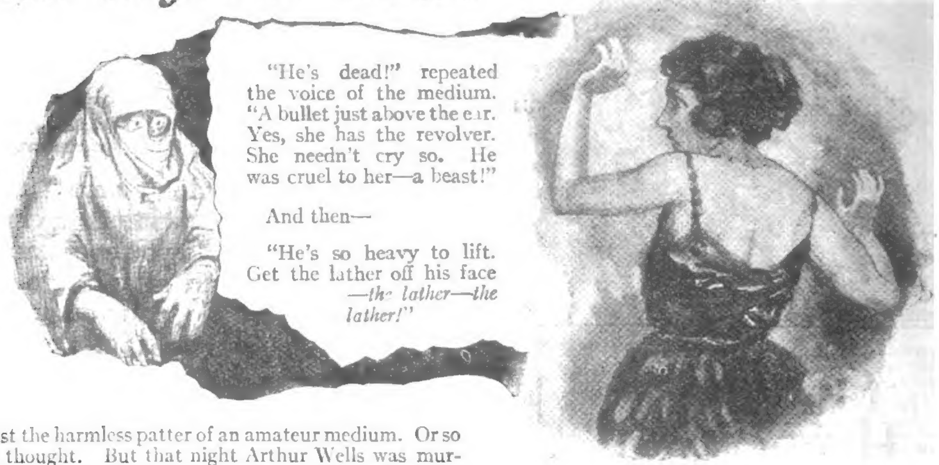

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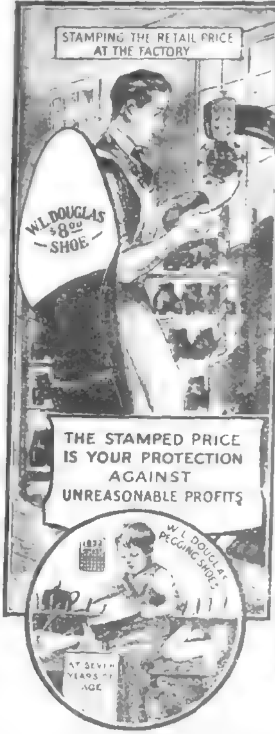
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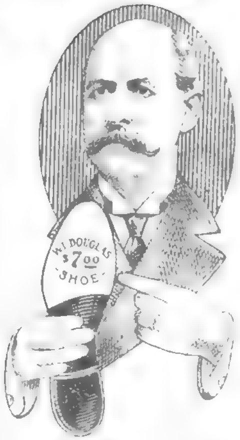

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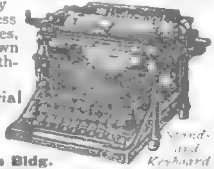

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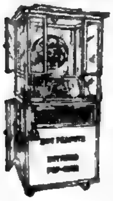

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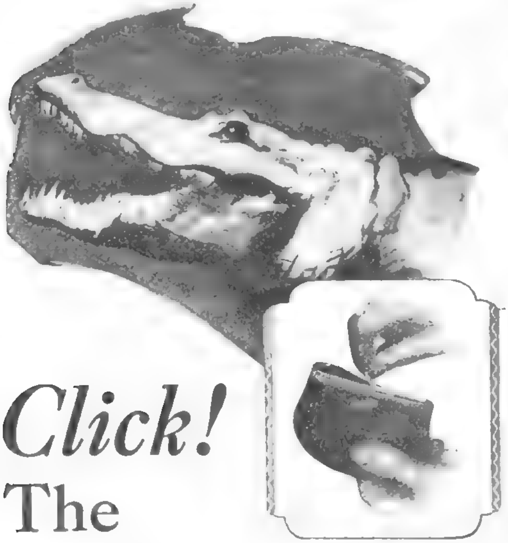

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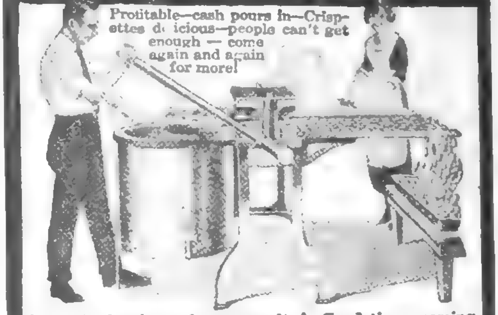
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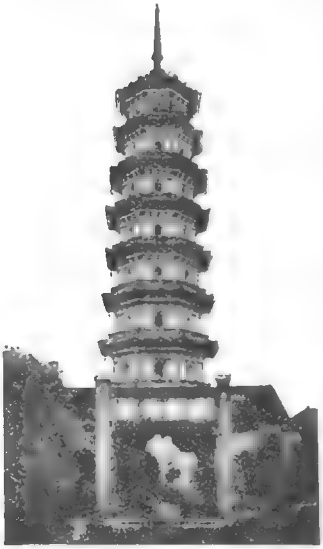

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Canton, China—The famous Flower Pagoda

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Advertising section continued in rear of book

Everybody's

NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

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Everybody's

NUMBER FOUR OCTOBER, 1922 VOLUME XLVII

When Folly Is an Asset

SOME one, in writing to me a few days ago, said, "You are a foolish and incurable idealist."

Very well. I hope he is right. Folly is a happy thing enough for me if such be the case. My ideal is very, very simple.

What matters it if he, or you, or I, have ever met, or ever shall?

There is the unseen spirit of mankind amidst us all. A friend, writing to me a day or so ago, said, "I will send you my picture," and in reply, I said, "Send me that picture; but it may remain long unopened in my drawer."

When one has the picture of a brother man in one's own imaginings, seeing only the beauty that lies in his mind, and forgetting whatever, if anything indeed there be, of evil, it seems to me that one's own heart is thereby enriched by the gentleness that men speak of as "love."

It seems to me that I do not need to see the framework of the flesh upon a friend's spirit—the spirit is all-sufficient.

Bill Adams.

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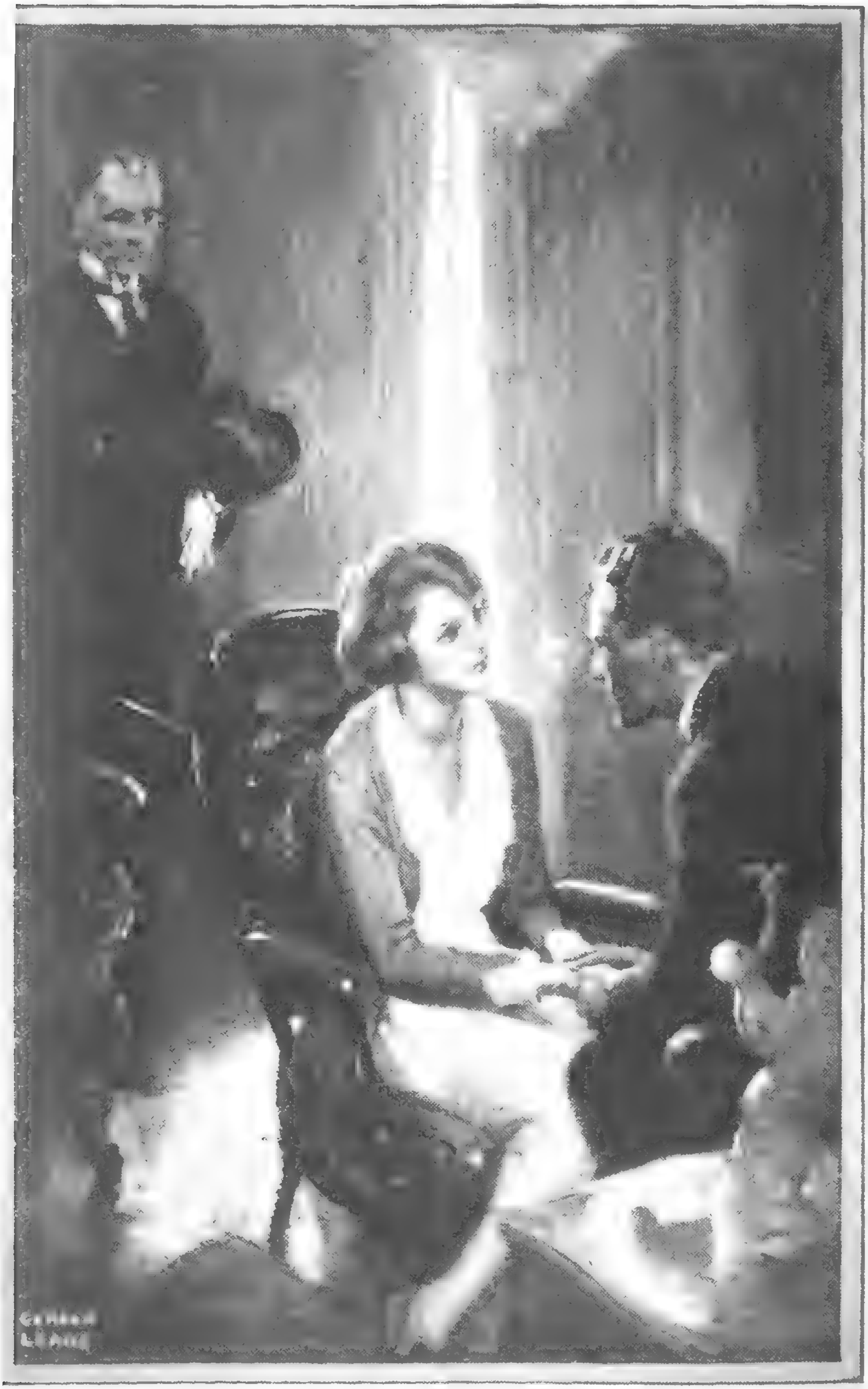


She looked up into his face appealingly, her brilliant eyes veiled with tears. As they sat thus, the Marquis de Granlieu entered the room.

A STORY of Paris, City of Contrasts. Its Laughing Surface, Its Sinister Under Side, Its Anonymous, Relentless Crime-Hunters, the Sûreté Police

The Pointed Tower

Vance Thompson's *New Mystery Serial*

Illustrations by Gerald Leake

IT WAS a spring morning in Paris. The clocks had struck the half-hour after nine. The Pont Saint Michel was not crowded, as it had been a little earlier, when men and women, on their way to shops and offices, had streamed across it toward the business heart of Paris. It was not deserted; the Pont Saint Michel is never deserted, for it links the Latin Quarter to the great city.

Mr. Guelpa was taking the air. He was a very small man, and very neat, buttoned up in a smart black coat, from the breast of which billowed a bright-blue necktie fastened with a round agate scarf-pin. He had a short mustache, dyed a purplish black, although the wisps of hair on his bony head were gray. His face was covered with a network of wrinkles; the eyes behind his gold-rimmed glasses were gray and steady—cold eyes that saw things.

Mr. Guelpa approached the bridge from the Latin Quarter and walked on a half-dozen yards and paused. The view was worth while. Beneath him the somber river swept darkly—for even in the springtime the Seine, at this point, has something sinister about it; but Mr. Guelpa did not look down at the sullen river. High in the clear morning air, the twin towers of Notre Dame rose—age-old symbols of pride and prayer; but Mr. Guelpa did not look up at the stone symbols. Beyond, the Pointed Tower stood. It was high, sharp and menacing; it looked like a lean metallic finger raised in warning over the unquiet city—the Pointed Tower, which marks the home of the crime-hunters of Paris, those secret, anonymous and relentless police of the *Sûreté*.

Mr. Guelpa did not look up at the Pointed Tower. What Mr. Guelpa looked at was everything that went on two feet.

He watched the passers-by—not eagerly, but in a cold and placid way, as though he were studying humanity. Having lit a cigarette, he strolled on. He had gone but a little distance when he began to walk more slowly—very slowly. On the opposite side of the bridge, a woman coming from the other direction had halted. Now she was leaning over the parapet of the bridge, looking down into the water. The roadway was not crowded at this hour of the morning—only an occasional motor-'bus, a cart, a cab, an automobile passed—and Mr. Guelpa could see the woman distinctly. She was rather tall, dressed in a blue walking-suit, the skirt narrow and the coat cut in the English fashion. The hair seen under her somewhat smart straw hat was light in color—the color of wrapping-paper. Quietly as she stood there, soberly as she was dressed, there was still something about her that held Mr. Guelpa's attention.

She bore the impress of more than one way of life—just as with the English walking-suit she wore a smart French hat, just as her English walk had been deformed by her high-heeled French shoes. She stood almost motionless, looking down at the river, one hand in the pocket of her coat. When a woman leans over a bridge, staring down into the sinister waters of the Seine, anything may happen—anything. Mr. Guelpa watched her more closely—he watched the hand in the pocket. She glanced round; there was no one near her. She took her hand out of her pocket—Mr. Guelpa noticed it was folded up as though holding something—and leaned once more on the parapet. She was very still, but he made out a slight motion of the right shoulder, as though she were tapping the parapet with her right hand. This lasted only a moment. Abruptly, with a sort of impatient gesture, she turned away and went swiftly toward the Latin Quarter.

"English," said Mr. Guelpa to himself, as he watched her hurrying away; "the English walk, flat on the foot—changed, of course, by those high French heels."

And Mr. Guelpa drew a deduction. He based it upon many things—upon her general appearance, which was that of a woman who did not fit precisely into any clearly defined class, who might have been a wife or a *cocotte* or a pickpocket, and was, therefore, hard to classify, although there was an air of strain—a tense air—about her that did not speak of quiet thoughts.

Mr. Guelpa based his deduction also upon the swift, watchful glance she had taken to right and left before she took the thing—was it poison?—from her pocket. Thinking of these things and her departure, so sudden it was almost flight, he said to himself: "Lacked courage—the water looked too dirty and too cold. But she meant to do it. She had a bad night, a sleepless night, and it all seemed easy enough as she thought it over in the dark—a drug to make all sure and then a plunge in the river. But she couldn't do it by daylight. It's at night the call of the Seine is loudest."

A few dozen people—two dozen, it may be—had passed the spot where the woman had paused to stare down into the Seine, and, lacking courage, gone her way, when a man in gray came along. Precisely at the spot she had halted, he stopped. He took a cigarette from a leather case, lit it, and dropped the match in the river. As he did so, he leaned over the parapet, as though he were watching the tiny piece of wood in its downward flight. He was over medium height, with square shoulders and an upright carriage and dressed in rough tweed clothes. In no way a remarkable man—unmistakably English.

IT WAS curious, Mr. Guelpa thought, that the man should have chosen just that spot and no other. At so many other places he might have stopped to light a cigarette. Why there? He remembered the slight, swift movement the woman had made with her right hand. And, as though in answer to his thought, the man swept his hand carelessly to and fro across the top of the parapet, then turned on his heel and went back the way he had come. Why, Mr. Guelpa asked himself, did he turn back?

The woman coming from the right bank of the river had, after halting on the bridge, gone on her way toward the Latin Quarter; why should a man cross the bridge just to that spot where she had stopped, and then wheel about and return to the right bank, whence he had come? One does not go half-way and then turn back without a reason.

Mr. Guelpa started to cross the roadway to the other foot-path. His mind was pleasantly agitated. His thoughts were busy with the man in tweeds and the woman who had taken something from her pocket. And in this moment, when he was indifferent to everything else, an automobile—not running very fast, but running very silently—bore down upon him. The mud-guard struck him and, as he reeled, there was a scream from the motor-car and he saw a woman's face.

Hardly for a second he saw it—this young white face, with dark eyes, wide with terror—but it stamped itself on his memory. As he reeled back into the roadway, Mr. Guelpa nearly fell under the wheels of a motor-'bus. He was indeed falling when a strong hand gripped him and dragged him up. A second later, shaken and confused, he stood on the foot-path, that strong grip on his arm, and heard a kindly, sarcastic voice saying,

"You chose a bad place for wool-gathering, Mr. Guelpa."

Mr. Guelpa drew a deep breath and looked himself over carefully.

"I didn't even lose my hat," he said at last. Then he looked at the man who had rescued him. "So it is you, Rossignol? I am very grateful. It was my fault. I was thinking of something else."

"I am afraid it was your fault, Mr. Guelpa," said Rossignol. "I saw it all. That is why I let the car go, but I have the number."

"You took the number?" Mr. Guelpa said. "So did I. I didn't mean to, but it printed itself on my mind. Just note that, Rossignol. When the mind is shocked into excitement by some unexpected emotion, it becomes a sensitive plate and records everything. Did you see the face of that woman in the car? No; your mind was not transformed into a sensitive photographic plate by sudden peril of death. Mine was; and that woman's face is printed on my mind—like a photograph. I may live a hundred years——"

"Not if you go wool-gathering in the middle of the Pont Saint Michel."

"In a hundred years I'll not forget that face," Mr. Guelpa continued, unsmiling.

ROSSIGNOL looked at Mr. Guelpa with an interest in which there was a great deal of affection, in spite of the amusement in his eyes. He was not much taller than Mr. Guelpa—a short, chunky young fellow, muscular and quick, in spite of his build. His arms were long for a man of his height, and the hands at the end of them were thick and strong, doubling up easily into fists. Whimsical gray eyes looked out of his round, young face. A brown mustache shaded his mouth. Altogether, he was a bold-looking young man, full of vigor—given, one would fancy, to easy laughter and simple jokes. He was dressed in dark, shabby clothes and wore an old straw hat.

"I'm due at the Pointed Tower at ten, Mr. Guelpa," he said.

"You've plenty of time, Inspector," replied Mr. Guelpa, "and the time you spend with me is profitably spent—eh?" He took Inspector Rossignol by the arm. "I have something to show you," he said.

"What?" Rossignol asked, with that smile of his, half kindly, half tolerant.

"I don't know," Mr. Guelpa replied. "I've not looked at it myself— Ah!" he exclaimed, as he stared down at the parapet, where both the woman and the man had halted. There were traces of bluish dust—a bluish cloud—as though something had been roughly obliterated.

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" said Mr. Guelpa. "So that was it—the woman wrote it and the man rubbed it out. Of course. Chalk," he added, after a closer inspection, "blue chalk, probably billiard-chalk, as there is a consistency to it—yes. Now, what do you make of that, Rossignol?"

The inspector laughed.

"What do I make of it? Just what you make of it—a smudge of blue chalk."

"But why here?" Mr. Guelpa asked.

"Because some little boy made it—or some *apache* signaling to his dreary girl—or—but what's the use of supposing anything? It is rubbed out."

"Rossignol, Rossignol"—tapping the parapet with his forefinger—"nothing is ever rubbed out."

"Another theory, Mr. Guelpa?" the inspector inquired, smiling.

"Nothing can be rubbed out," Mr. Guelpa went on, unheeding the interruption, "nothing. When one kind of matter is superimposed upon another kind of matter, the trace—the record—always remains. Do you know a game the idle play? It is called 'ghost signatures'. You write your name on a smooth sheet of paper, using plenty of ink and, while it is still wet, fold it over and take an impress. It is a queer-looking thing. The signature has become a blur, and opposite it is another blur—the ghost of it. You can't read that name if you look down on it, but hold it sidewise, and the signature is as plain as print. You ought to know these things, Rossignol. Why don't you read that book? I didn't give it to you to sit on. Rub out anything? Mr. Gross, of Athens, brought me a papyrus that was absolutely blank—I photographed it—sidewise, Rossignol, sidewise in an oblique light—and the message, buried for thousands of years, came to life on the chromolite plate. Eh? This smudge of blue chalk—we have only been looking at it; now observe it. He bent over until his cheek was nearly level with the top of the parapet and glanced sidewise at the blue cloud. "Of course," he said, straightening up. "Look yourself, Rossignol."

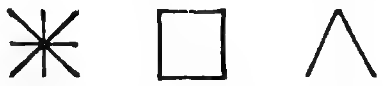
The inspector leaned down and scanned the smudge of blue chalk.

"You're right, Mr. Guelpa; I've learned something."

"That's the best thing about you, Rossignol—you can learn. What did you see?"

"Marks," replied Rossignol.

"Like these," Mr. Guelpa asked; and on the back of an envelope he drew these figures:



"Right, sir!" admitted the inspector.

Mr. Guelpa nodded approval. Then he took a handkerchief from his pocket, unfolded it and rubbed it to and fro over the smudge until the white linen was thickly stained with chalk. Seemingly there was little left on the parapet, and Rossignol, bending down and looking sidewise, could see no trace of the marks.

"You seem to have rubbed out something this time, Mr. Guelpa," he said.

Mr. Guelpa shook his head.

"The marks are still there—not for your eye, but the unfailing one of the camera."

Very carefully he folded up his handkerchief so the blue stains on it were inside, and put it in his pocket.

"I have not thanked you enough, Rossignol," he said, "but I shall not forget you saved me."

"Only from a fall, sir,"

They shook hands, and the inspector, touching his hat, turned toward the Pointed Tower, while Mr. Guelpa went slowly toward the left bank. He was still thinking of the ideograph traced with blue chalk on the bridge. Even for him it was not easy enough to read. During his twenty years at the Technical Police Laboratory, he had studied that subject—written upon it and lectured upon it, as upon many others. In his little treatise, "*La Langue des Criminels*," he had given hundreds of examples of these conventional symbols scrawled the world over by thieves and rogues who seek a safe and simple way of communicating with each other. The star was easy to interpret; it always meant the same thing from Cairo to Chicago. It was the symbol of good luck, that "all goes well," that "everything is all right." But the others—the open triangle, the square—What was their message? Mr. Guelpa was not without vanity, and it was precisely because he could not read them that he had made no attempt to interpret them to Inspector Rossignol.

He had come to the Place Saint Michel and, his mind still busy with the problem, paused near the newspaper *kiosque* to let a tram go by. The sides of the *kiosque* were draped with the morning newspapers. One of them caught his eye. It was *Excelsior*—the picture-paper. On the title-page was a two-column photograph of a little pool of water with a thicket of trees in the background. To the left was a man's portrait; to the right the photograph of a woman in evening dress. It was the woman's face that attracted him. It was a young face, proud and happy, with a hint of hidden laughter in the eyes and round the mouth; where had he seen it before? Mr. Guelpa peered at it through his glasses. Surely he had seen that face somewhere, but not like this—with its hidden smile and look of pride and happiness.

And then he remembered. It was the startled face that had looked out at him from the window of that motor-car on the bridge!

Underneath he read, "The Comtesse de Granlieu, whose husband's dead body was discovered late last night in the Bois."

A BUNDLE of newspapers under his arm, Mr. Guelpa walked along the quay for a few yards and turned—by the seed shop at the corner—into the Rue Gît-le-Cœur. An old street, and small, it is still an estimable street, an honest street, uncorrupted by the nocturnal habits of the Latin Quarter, which lies about it. For hundreds of years generation has succeeded generation in the shops and the high, narrow rooms above. And yet, for all its orderly routine of work and trade, there clings to the little street a kind of romance. It is due perhaps to the name, this *hic jacet* of some heart that broke long ago, for the inhabitants are convinced that "Gît-le-Cœur" described a buried heart.

Mr. Guelpa loved the little street. He had lived there as a student. And after many years he had come back to it—to the eternal children playing mysterious games on the cobblestones, to the cats and *concierges* drowsing in the half-open doorways, to the sparrows daintily walking the gutters.

That was a year ago. For twelve months Mr. Guelpa had been—he was fond of telling himself—a free man, and his freedom was still so new a thing that he took both pleasure and pride in it. After thirty years of labor, idleness was good; but better still, after many years of notoriety, was the quiet obscurity of the Street of the Buried Heart.

Dr. Jules-Marie Guelpa, *Directeur du Laboratoire de Police de Lyon*—with a dozen distinguished titles after his name—was far too prominent a person to get any peace out of life. Wherever civilization fought the obscure forces of crime, the weapons it used were those drawn from the technical laboratory over which, for twenty years, Dr. Jules-Marie Guelpa had presided. There is such a thing as being too famous for one's peace of mind. It was pleasant to sink quietly into the quasi-anonymity of Mr. Guelpa. It was pleasant to do as one pleased.

With this thought in his mind, Mr. Guelpa paused and glanced up at the narrow windows of Number Twelve; from one of the windows of the second floor a round, solemn face with pale eyes looked out at him. Mr. Guelpa smiled, waved his hand and went briskly up the stairs.

The solemn face met him at the door. It belonged to a short, fat girl of fourteen. Mr. Guelpa kissed her and patted her shoulder.

"Waiting for me, Julie?" he asked.

"Yes, father," the girl said gloomily.

"Well, well," said Mr. Guelpa; "come to the study. Is mother out?"

Julie shook her head. Together they went softly up the interior staircase that led to the third story.

Mr. Guelpa's marriage had been for the noblest motives. It had taken place after he returned from his famous journey to São Paulo, in Brazil. He had always felt that a grave judicial error had been committed in Madame Oliveira's case, even though she had been convicted only of manslaughter, and a little of the blame, he felt, should be laid upon him.

"There was something wrong with my analysis of her psychic process," he told himself. "I do not know enough about women."

IN ORDER to remedy this defect in his technical education, Mr. Guelpa got married. And that the family might be complete, he married a widow with a small blond child. It is only fair to say that from his wife he learned many things. She was a dark, tall woman, with thick hair and bright eyes—an impulsive and commanding woman who took Mr. Guelpa in hand as though he had been a schoolboy. The one side of his life that she left free was his work. That she did not understand, though she admired it. When he had retired and gone on half-pay, she realized that what had lent him importance had gone. It was a great pity she had no son to carry on the work. But what a man could do, a woman could do; and by her orders the somber and patient Julie was sent daily to Mr. Guelpa's study. For Julie, Madame Guelpa saw a brilliant and formidable future in the world of science where once her husband had shone like a star.

Unlocking the door of his study, Mr. Guelpa went in, and Julie followed. Since he retired from work, it was notable that Mr. Guelpa spent all his time doing precisely the work he had done before he retired.

It was a long, narrow room with a high groined ceiling. Near the windows stood a large table covered, in an orderly way, with books, papers, manuscripts, while piled up at the one end were the fourteen volumes of Mr. Guelpa's works—his chemico-legal text-books, his classic book on evidence, his description of the poroscope—that strange invention of his which had given the world a new and infallible method of identifying criminals—and many others. Mr. Guelpa's life-work was in those volumes, and they contained as well all that is known at present of the modern scientific method of detecting crime. The rest, unwritten, is still in Mr. Guelpa's head. For it is within the last thirty years that the science of criminology has been created; and it is no mere coincidence that for thirty years exactly Mr. Guelpa was the head of the Technical Police Laboratory of Lyons—to-day presided over by his distinguished successor, Dr. Edmond Locard. What Mr. Guelpa made of the Lyons laboratory is known to every criminologist. It stands high above all institutions for the detection of crime. Only two can be compared with it—that of São Paulo, in Brazil, and that of Rabat, in Morocco, and both of them were established under Mr. Guelpa's direction. At Lauzanne there is a crime-laboratory founded by Reiss, but it is—like the one directed by Professor Stockis at Liège—merely an adjunct to the university. The laboratory at Rome, as at Madrid, is only an annex of the police school. It is much the same thing at Paris and Berlin and Buenos Aires, where the laboratory work is a mere extension of the Bureau of Identification. London and New York hardly count in the new science of crime-detection. There police are still imbued with the idea that if they can beat a suspected criminal over the head until he confesses, or bring against him a cloud of witnesses, they have done all that is necessary for a conviction. The basis of Mr. Guelpa's epoch-making work was his statement that human evidence, whether it be that of a detective or a stool-pigeon or that of the criminal himself, is always subject to suspicion; that it is never convincing. Indeed, his great discovery was that human evidence is always false.

"The only witnesses who never lie," said Mr. Guelpa, "are those who cannot talk."

He went toward the far end of the room and turned on an electric lamp which lighted his laboratory table, with its apparatus for chemical analysis, its microphotographic outfit, its biometer under a glass case. He cleared a space on the table and covered it with a sheet of clean paper. Then he drew from his pocket the folded handkerchief stained with blue chalk and laid it carefully on the paper.

"Father," said Julie, "what am I to do?"

Mr. Guelpa looked up. His stepchild was sitting gloomily by the window.

"You might begin by reading the newspapers," said Mr. Guelpa.

Julie sighed heavily and took up the *Matin*.

Mr. Guelpa covered the handkerchief with a sheet of glass and went over to the writing-table. The chalk could wait; his mind had turned to those rough ideographs drawn on the parapet of the bridge. He took out the envelope on which he had copied them and began to scrutinize them.

THE star was not difficult to interpret; in the world of criminals it had one unfailing meaning—"all's well"—but it may be applied in many ways. Scratched on the wall of a country house, it tells the thief that the house can be broken into without difficulty; attached to a name, it would mean the criminal was in safety; but always it signified, among criminals of all countries, something good, just as a cross means danger. The square is less precise.

"What do you make of the square, Julie?"

She laid down the newspaper and stared placidly at the envelope.

"Nothing," she replied.

"Quite right," said Mr. Guelpa. "The first thing is to keep an open mind. I don't make much of it myself. The trouble is it can mean anything. The Austro-German criminals use it to denote plunder; the ordinary French vagabond uses it as the symbol for a house. But if one criminal wishes to communicate with another in this way, it might be agreed between them that it should stand for anything—for a house at which they were to meet or any they were to rob. It all depends. As for the open triangle," continued Mr. Guelpa, "it seems also to be a conventional symbol, and there is no clue to the meaning. It may mean anything."

"I thought it was the letter 'V'," said Julie.

"Eh?" exclaimed Mr. Guelpa, "you are seeing it upside down. And yet— Julie, run down to your mother at once and tell her I have complimented you on your intelligence."

"Yes, father."

And when he was alone, Mr. Guelpa took her suggestion and worked out the ideograph thus: "Square is all right; signed 'V'."

What was "square"? What was "all right"? If all went well with the criminals who had communicated with each other in this way, all was not going well with honest folk. Or were they mere sentimentalists, hiding some illegal love-intrigue?

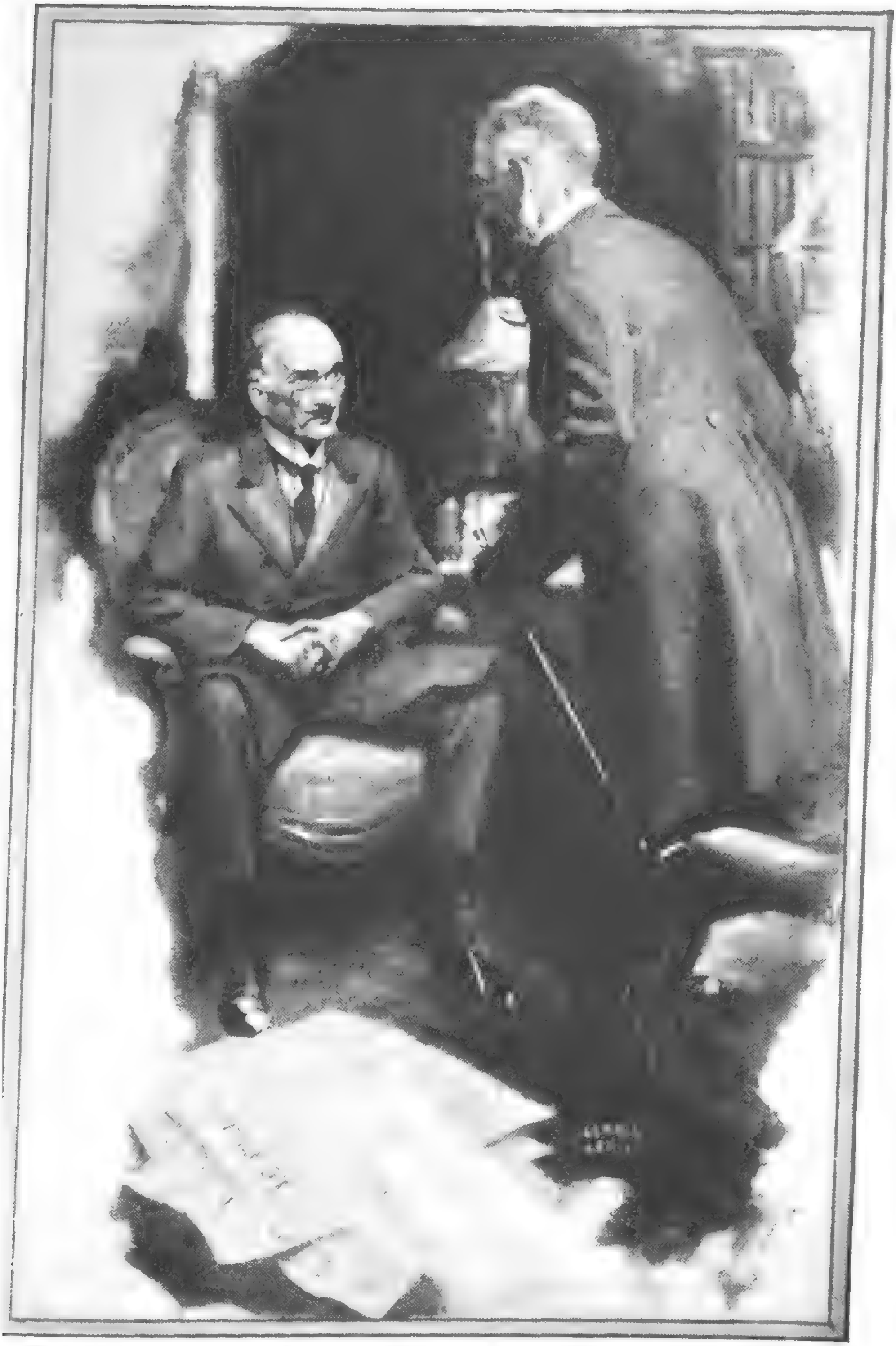
Love or crime? In his experience, Mr. Guelpa had not found that the two blend. The old theory of "*Cherchez la femme*" was outworn; modern science, instead of saying, "Look for the woman," when a crime was committed, said, "Look for the fingerprints."

Or the blue chalk——

But to trace in Paris a piece of blue chalk, such as was used in thousands of billiard-rooms, presented difficulties.

"Which makes it interesting," Mr. Guelpa concluded.

He took up the *Excelsior* and went over to the window-seat, where the light was good. He looked again at the photograph of the Comtesse de Granlieu. That was the



"Then the authorities have decided that the Comte de Granlieu killed himself?" Mr. Guelpa asked quietly. This brought the marquis to his feet with an exclamation of surprise.

face he had seen in the window of the big automobile which had almost run him down on the bridge. And the man's portrait? That narrow, handsome face, with the heavy-lidded eyes and the small, impudent mustache was as well known to Parisians as the president of France, for the Comte de Granlieu's adventures—in love and finance and matrimony—had made him notorious. He had made an art of extravagance, and his fantastic, spendthrift life had interested the newspapers of two continents. And this was the end!

There, by the sullen little pool in the Bois, near the Porte d'Auteuil, his body had been found—a bullet-hole through the brain. A policeman had come upon it at dawn. It lay near the roadway, but half screened by the thick bushes which at this point bordered the little pool of water. There were no signs of a struggle. The body lay seemingly just as it had fallen—the legs slightly drawn up; one arm, the right arm, extended, and to the right, four feet away, lay a revolver. The wound was on the right side of the face, though it was impossible to see exactly where the bullet had entered as the blood lay thick upon it. There was blood, too, on the collar and on the white shirt-front, for the body was in evening dress. If he had been standing when the bullet entered his brain, the blood had flown down, staining his linen, and only when the body collapsed and fell backward had it formed that curious red, half-dried mask on the right side of the face. So far as the gendarme could see, there were no signs of robbery. A thin platinum chain was stretched across the white waistcoat from pocket to pocket. The watch was still running. There were rings on the long white hands. A small silk case with folded bank-notes was in the pocket of the coat.

THESE were the facts Mr. Guelpa gleaned from the newspapers as he sat in the window-seat of his study that morning. It was evident that the usual procedure had been followed. The *commissaire* of police had been summoned immediately; he had arrived on the scene, accompanied by his two secretaries and a half-dozen police, but already a small crowd had gathered. The police drove back the crowd and established a *cordon* round the dead body. While waiting for his colleague from the Palais de Justice, the *commissaire* made a rapid examination of the body. The red blotch of blood on the right cheek stained but did not disfigure the lean, handsome face. And in this crumpled body, lying there by the dark little pool, the *commissaire* recognized one of the notorieties of Paris—famous for his social splendors, his debts and duels and amours—the Comte de Granlieu.

"Suicide," he said bluntly. "Well, he had a fast run for his money."

Plain as the case of suicide seemed, the *commissaire* and his colleagues left the body untouched until Dr. Cray, the medico-legal officer, arrived, for his is the authoritative decision as to whether death has been due to crime, accident or suicide. In this case, Dr. Cray's examination was very quickly made. The revolver lay near at hand. The bullet, entering just in front of the ear, had slanted upward through the brain—it was such a wound as a man holding a revolver in his right hand would have made firing upward. Dr. Cray's mind was made up.

"He came along the gravel path," said the *commissaire*, "so, of course, there are no marks of his footsteps. Then, standing on the edge of the path—just here—he fired the shot. The revolver jerked out of his hand as he fell back, half under the bushes, and he was dead in a moment."

"Something like that," agreed Dr. Cray.

He picked up the revolver. It was a small Leroy weapon, the butt covered with silver, marked with the count's crest.

It was the opinion of the medico-legal officer, the *Excelsior* added, that death had occurred about eleven o'clock the evening before; a post-mortem examination, however, would be made to determine the exact hour.

This was all Mr. Guelpa found in the French newspapers; but the *New York Herald* had issued a late edition in which—more daring than the Parisian press—it had given a sketch of the Comte de Granlieu's life of riot and splendor which had ended so gruesomely in the midnight isolation of the Bois. It told of his illustrious family, which dated from the days of the Valois kings, of his debts and duels and notorious love-affairs that had made Europe ring with scandal. And then it described his "reformation" at thirty and his marriage with Eva Ryle, the American heiress, whose millions had gilded his aristocratic poverty and placed him once more on the crest of Parisian society. That had been five years ago. For the Comte de Granlieu, they had been five years of splendor—he had poured out gold upon Paris as one pours water out of a bowl. His receptions, his racing-stables, his balls, his yacht, the big new palace he had built near the Bois—of all these things the *New York Herald* (Paris Edition) wrote glowingly. Toward the end of the article there crept in a grimmer statement:

> It is known that the fortune of the Comtesse de Granlieu has been seriously impaired by the count's endless extravagances. His debts are said to be so great that not even an American fortune such as that of the late J. B. Ryle, the father of the countess, could meet them. It is known, moreover, the count and countess separated a few weeks ago after what is said to have been a bitter quarrel. The count left the mansion in the Avenue Henri Martin. Instead of going to the house of his father, the Marquis de Granlieu, as might have been expected, he took a bachelor suite of rooms in the Rue Boissy-d'Anglas.
>
> Hopeless of reconciling himself with the countess—and the Ryle millions—it would seem that the unfortunate gentleman, who counted only friends in the social world of which he was so bright an ornament, left his lonely rooms and sought out this quiet corner of the Bois, which is always deserted at night, to end his career by suicide.

Mr. Guelpa took up once more the *Excelsior* and scrutinized the picture of the Comtesse de Granlieu.

"This lady of the millions," he said to himself softly, "what was she doing on the Pont Saint Michel at half-past nine o'clock this morning? The dead body of her husband had been discovered at dawn, only a few hours before that time. What was she doing on the bridge?

At this moment, hearing a noise in the quiet Street of the Buried Heart, where nothing ever happens, he looked down from the narrow window and saw that a large closed automobile had stopped in front of his house. A few moments later Julie knocked at the door and came in, with a card in her hand.

"A gentleman wants to see you, father."

The name on the card was that of the Marquis de Granlieu.

THE motor-car which so nearly ran down Mr. Guelpa on the bridge was that of the young Comtesse de Granlieu, and—Mr. Guelpa had not been mistaken—it was her face he had seen at the window. She had been intensely frightened at the sudden accident. It seemed as though death were dogging her that morning. She told her chauffeur to drive home—and fast! She sat half forward on the seat in a tense attitude, strained, impatient.

She was young, perhaps not more than twenty-five years old. She had always been beautiful, and she was beautiful now, in spite of the terror in her face—the sleepless eyes and set mouth. She was not tall, but her firm, young body, vital and slim, was perfect in outline, and her oval face flawless as a Roman coin.

When the motor-car drew up at the great iron gates of her house—the huge marble house on which the count had wasted her millions—she jumped out quickly, almost before the car had come to a standstill. The gates, as usual, were open. She went swiftly up the path to the pillared entrance. A man who had apparently just been turned away from the door came down the steps toward her. She gave a little cry.

"It's you—at last—John! I've been trying to find you——"

"You knew I would come, Eva. You got my message?"

"Yes—last night," she said, and a shudder seemed to run through her from head to foot. "Come in; come in."

They did not speak again until a servant had opened the door and they were alone in the small *salon* far at the back of the house, looking out on a garden where a fountain played. The man waited for her to speak. He was a man of thirty or so, evidently an American, evidently, also, a gentleman, with good athletic shoulders and a frank, open face, remarkable only for the eyes, which were rarely wide open—he seemed to look at life suspiciously and watchfully under half-closed lids. If the face was frank—bar the eyes—it was kindly, too; it may be the countess read more than kindliness in it. She went up to him with both hands outstretched.

"My God!" she said. "If you had not come!"

"I came at once, Countess."

"Countess!" she cried. "And am I to call you 'Mr. Faynis?' Oh, John!"

"Eva, then," he said. "I came at once. Your cablegram reached me late Tuesday night and the next day I was on the steamer. I arrived in Paris last evening. I came here immediately. You were not at home."

"No," she said. "I was not at home."

She sat down in a large chair away from the window and motioned him to take a seat near her.

"You know about him?" she asked in a whisper.

"Yes—at least what was in the newspapers this morning," Faynis replied in a voice almost as low as her own. "My poor Eva, I know how frightful the shock must be. Can you bear to speak of it?"

"I must," she said. "I've been waiting for you—waiting— You see, he had spent all my money, and the banks wouldn't give me any, and there were debts—terrible debts—and I thought if you came——"

"There will be no more trouble about money, Eva. I have full authority from the executors of your father's estate to get you out of all your financial troubles."

"And you have come a day too late!"

"You must tell me what has happened, Eva"—he gripped her hand compellingly—"tell me everything."

"Yes; I will tell you," she said.

She did not try to release her hand, and, sitting thus, John Faynis listened with half-shut eyes and the intentness his profession—that of a lawyer—had taught him. She did not go back very far. There was no need of it. Though he had not seen her since her marriage—perhaps had thought never to see her again—it had been his business, as legal adviser of the Ryle estate, to know a great deal of what was happening in Paris during those years when the Comte de Granlieu was throwing millions into the air—to be caught as they fell by women and wasters and money-lenders and thieves.

They had been separated for six weeks, she told him; the count had left the house and gone to a bachelor apartment.

"Why?" asked Faynis.

"It was always the same thing—money. I told him I had no money to give him. I had nothing, nothing. He was very angry, and we quarreled. Then he went away."

"That was all? Just the quarrel about money?"

"Yes," she said, after a long pause; "that was all."

"Then because you could give him no more money, he left you—left his home—and went to live alone in that little apartment?" Faynis said slowly.

"Yes; that is what happened."

"And you never saw him again?"

"No," she answered quickly, "I never saw him again." His face told her plainly that he did not believe her.

"Listen, Eva," he said, and leaned forward and touched her hand; "I do not know what is in your mind, but if I am to help you, I must know. You are keeping something back. Is it to shield yourself? After the way he has treated you, I can hardly believe it is to shield him. Now tell me the truth."

"I have told you."

"Then when did you see him last?"

Again there was silence; she sat staring at the floor, very pale and motionless; his hand was still lightly touching hers, and suddenly she laid her other hand on his and held it fast.

"Tell me, dear," he insisted.

"Three days ago," she whispered.

Faynis gave no sign of emotion, save for a steadier grip of her little hand.

"Where?" he asked gently.

"At the Dubrowski's ball."

"What happened?"

"We quarreled."

"What about?"

"It was always the same thing—money. It never was anything else. Money and debts and lies!"

"And then?"

"Then I left him."

"And three days later," said Faynis gravely, "he shot himself in the Bois."

"Yes."

The countess sighed. Her hand was still in his; she seemed to draw comfort from it.

"It is very strange."

"Yes; but I have told you everything—and I've told it to you alone, John. No one need know of our last quarrel—our miserable and sordid quarrel— I am ashamed—ashamed—and now it is all over—John?"

She looked up into his face appealingly, her brilliant eyes veiled with tears. Her hands were locked round his hand, and she leaned toward him entreatingly.

AS THEY sat thus, the Marquis de Granlieu entered the room, paused a moment near the door, looking at them through his glass, and then came forward and bowed. No sign of emotion crossed his face. He held himself erect, in spite of his old and feeble body, like the valiant old man he was. He was dressed in black from head to foot. In spite of his age, the resemblance to his son—who lay dead with a bullet-hole through his brain—was striking.

Faynis had risen and stepped back.

The Marquis de Granlieu paid no attention to him. He bent over his daughter-in-law, lifted her little hand and kissed it. Not till then did he glance at Faynis.

"My lawyer, from New York," the countess said softly; she did not mention his name.

The marquis nodded coolly to Faynis, and then, as though the young man had ceased to exist, he sat down in the chair near his daughter-in-law.

"Countess, my wife would send you her sympathy"—his voice broke a little—"if she were able to do so. He was our only son."

Eva did not speak; she was afraid to try. A wave of sympathy for this old, old man seemed to be rising in her throat, choking her. She wanted to tell him how she pitied him, and she could not speak.

"When she is able to write or call," the marquis went on steadily, "my wife will express to you her sympathy."

"Thank you," Eva said.

Faynis had withdrawn to a window and stood looking out into the little garden.

"I have one request to make, Countess," the old man continued quietly. "It is that the body of the Comte de Granlieu may be brought to my home—it was always his home, *madame*, and he was always welcome there. You will consent to this, Countess? It would be better in every way—in every way," he repeated, though without emphasis.

"I do not know," said Eva. "I had thought——"

The marquis waited politely until it was evident she had no intention of finishing the sentence.

"This has not been my son's home," he continued, "for a long time—for many weeks. He would not care to come back here now, *madame*. I have asked your consent, Countess, that the Comte de Granlieu may be buried from the home of his father. May I have your reply?"

"You are right," she said softly. "It has not been his home for many weeks. I had hoped——"

Again she left the sentence uncompleted. In his polite, cold voice, the marquis finished it.

"You had hoped he would return?"

"Perhaps," she said.

"You had spoken with him about it after he left this house?" the marquis asked.

"No, no, no! I never saw him again."

"*Madame* is perturbed," the cold voice went on, "and I do not wonder. It was only three nights ago—six weeks after he left this house—that I was present at a conference between *madame la comtesse* and my son."

Eva glanced up at the old man with a sudden fear. The old face, the old eyes, the old voice were cold and hard as ice. A little shudder ran over her.

"I remember—yes; at the Dubrowski's ball. I had forgotten."

"The meeting was not so pleasant you would care to remember it," the marquis said quietly. With the cruelty that belongs only to youth or old age, he studied the shrinking woman and noted the fear in her eyes. Then he stood up.

"*Madame*, I have made a request. May I have your answer?"

"Yes. Have it as you will."

She, too, rose and held out her hand to him.

"Please let me do everything I can—please——"

The marquis raised her hand to his lips.

"Thank you," he said. "You are always gracious."

And when he had gone, Eva sank back in the chair and covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out the look of those cold and relentless eyes—and the smile on the old lips. She was crouching there in the chair when John Faynis came forward and touched her on the shoulder.

"And now, Eva," he said, "don't you think you had better tell me the truth?"

WHEN the Marquis de Granlieu left the house in the Avenue Henri Martin, he told the chauffeur to drive him home. Before the car had reached the Trocadéro, however, he had changed his mind. To his intense dislike for his daughter-in-law—for in the bitter disputes which had led to the final separation he had sided completely with his son—there had been added an element of distrust. In what she had said he had sensed, rather than discovered, a tone of falsehood. Something had happened which she was trying to hide—something terrible enough to drive his son, this lover of life and the good things thereof, to suicide. Lack of money was no sufficient cause; the count had his place in the world, his rank, his family—and would he have killed himself without leaving one word for his mother unless he had been forced to it by some compelling horror? And this foreign woman with her millions and her cruelty who had wrecked the count's life? Had she even tried to save him? Had she forgotten their meeting at the Dubrowski's ball?

The marquis had not forgotten. He could not think this out himself, but he knew whose assistance he needed.

The marquis, like most men of his class, could do few things for himself, but he had acquired in a high degree the art of living. He depended upon the best experts—whether lawyer or manicure, tailor, doctor or chauffeur—to do for him what had to be done. At this moment he remembered a lecture give by Dr. Jules-Marie Guelpa, a few months before, on scientific methods of criminal investigation; he had been interested in the lecture and impressed by the man. He stopped the car and told his valet, who was on the front seat with the chauffeur, to ascertain Mr. Guelpa's address. The directory in a chance café gave the street and number, and in a short time the motor-car had drawn up in front of Mr. Guelpa's door.

The two old men looked at each other—the one a keen little man, smart and dainty, with dyed mustache and eyebrows, and the other lean and erect in his padded black coat—and each thought of the other, "He's older than I fancied he was."

"You will sit down, Marquis?" Mr. Guelpa said, making way for him. There were two chairs near the table by the window, one with its back to the window and the other facing it—in the full light. It was toward the latter chair that the marquis advanced.

"Would you mind taking the other chair, *monsieur?*" Mr. Guelpa asked, with his short little laugh. "The light will not be in your eyes."

That was the only explanation he gave, but he had another; he used to say, "When I am talking with a man, it is not on his face I want the light; I can tell more about him from the sound of his voice, but I want him to see my face—and read in it the things I put there for him to read."

The marquis sat erect, his black-gloved hands folded on the head of his black walking-stick. He looked Mr. Guelpa full in the face for a moment; then he glanced at the morning newspapers spread on the table.

"You know why I have come to you," he began. "My son—you have read about it. I have come for your advice. The police have done what they always do. The commissary and his colleague from the Palais de Justice have told me that my son"—he paused and repeated—"my son will be brought to my home after the medical formalities have been completed. I want your help and advice, Dr. Guelpa."

" 'Mr. Guelpa,' please. When I retired, I left all my titles behind me."

The marquis waved aside the correction.

"Why did my son kill himself? I want you to find an answer to that question."

"Then the authorities have decided that the Comte de Granlieu killed himself?" he asked quietly.

THIS brought the marquis to his feet with an exclamation of surprise, but he recovered his self-control in a moment and resumed his seat. It was evident from Mr. Guelpa's sympathetic face that his question had no second intention.

"I will answer your question," the marquis said. "The authorities—the commissary and his secretary, the public prosecutor, the examining magistrate—all are of one opinion, I am informed. I presume that is the information you wanted, Mr. Guelpa?"

"Yes," said Mr. Guelpa; "that is what I wanted. If I am to give you my advice, *monsieur le marquis*, I must be exactly informed. The reason you have come to me is because you are in doubt as to the motive that led the Comte de Granlieu to take his own life. Am I right?"

"I may say you are right," the marquis answered slowly. "What motive could there have been?"

"Debts?" asked Mr. Guelpa.

"Debts!" said the marquis disdainfully, and then, with the cynical kind of humor that he showed now and then, he added: "If a Granlieu killed himself for debt, the race would have died out generations ago. The debts of the Comte de Granlieu were mere episodes. He cared for them no more than for the flower on his coat. His wife's fortune——"

"His wife's fortune? Yes?" Mr. Guelpa repeated. "Tell me about that."

"It is, of course, very large; but it is very strictly tied up, and there have been, I believe, difficult moments now and then—especially of late. But it is not possible, Mr. Guelpa, that my son should have been driven to do what he did by fear of debt."

"There are debts and debts," said Mr. Guelpa softly—perhaps the marquis did not hear him.

"And yet there must have been some very strong motive. My son was a happy man. He enjoyed life. He loved his mother. He would not have dealt her this blow—unless there were something serious. And that is what I want you to find out. There was nothing in his life—nothing——"

"There is always something in everyone's life," Mr. Guelpa observed, "and I think, *monsieur le marquis*, you have been trying to tell me something ever since you came into the room."

"It is difficult to say anything," the marquis said, after a moment's hesitation, "which might seem to reflect upon a lady—and one who bears my son's name; but I fear she is concealing something that a father has the right to know. Yes; I will be frank. Six weeks ago the Comte de Granlieu left the house in the Avenue Henri Martin and went into bachelor quarters—with only his personal attendant, Dominique. This morning, a little while ago—for I have just come from her home—the countess told me she had not seen the count since he left the house, six weeks ago.

"Why did he leave? I do not know. But that she saw him three nights ago I know too well. I need not say she had to admit it. I do not expect a woman to be truthful, but why should she attempt to deny she had met him? It was at a ball given by the Dubrowskis. I had to make an appearance there, but I went as late as possible—sometime after midnight. The ballroom was crowded with dancers, and I went to the conservatory at the back, whence I could watch the dancing. The conservatory was lit with dim blue lights—an effect of moonlight—and as I passed quietly amid the palms I heard a voice raised suddenly in anger. It was the voice of the Comtesse de Granlieu, saying: 'Never! Never! Never!' My son answered her. He spoke in the quiet, patient voice he used so often in speaking to her, and I did not hear what he said. I started forward to let them know of my presence, but I walk with difficulty, Mr. Guelpa, and I had taken only a few steps when she spoke again in her rapid clear voice. This time the words were: 'They are not yours—and if they ever were yours, you have lost all rights to them—as you have lost me—by your own fault—your own fault!' Then I heard my son say, 'You understand the situation, Eva, and this is your last word?' By this time I was not far from them, and I spoke my son's name. I do not think she heard. She was facing my son, and, still in an angry voice, she said once more: 'Never! Never! Never!' and turned swiftly away. Did she see me? I do not think so or she would have hardly had the effrontery this morning to deny this meeting with my son. And yet she may have seen me. I do not know. That is all, Mr. Guelpa."

"And your son told you nothing?"

"The Comte de Granlieu could not discuss his wife, Mr. Guelpa, even with his own father. There are things one cannot do."

"It is not unnatural she should have wished to conceal this quarrel in view of what has happened. And now she may be willing to explain it, if, indeed, it had any part in the subsequent tragedy. You wish me to do what I can to find out the motive—the cause, I may say—that led to the count's death?"

"I have come for nothing else," said the marquis. "There must remain no doubt as to the cause—no uncertainty which throws a hint of dishonor upon his name."

THE marquis rose slowly by the window, aiding himself with his walking-stick. Mr. Guelpa got up quickly and stood aside, that the way to the door might be clear. The marquis took a few steps, leaning heavily on his stick; then he straightened up and turned half round, facing the window. The strong midday light fell full upon his face. It was a strong, old face, finely featured, and it had worn for so many years a mask of arrogance and cynicism that it might have been cut out of ivory. Now, suddenly, as though the mask had been broken, there looked out of the face anger so fierce and savage that Mr. Guelpa lowered his eyes in spite of himself. And when the marquis spoke, the suavity had gone out of his well-bred voice; there was something harsh and snarling in it. What he said was:

"If you see the Comtesse de Granlieu, ask her the name of the Yankee she was wantoning with this morning—before her husband's body was cold. Ask her!"

Watching the marquis's face—watching the old, savage eyes—Mr. Guelpa nodded by way of showing his understanding, but did not speak.

At the door they shook hands, still in silence—only, when the marquis had been shown down to the street door and he was quite alone, Mr. Guelpa spoke softly to himself. What he said was: "Anger often says a great deal more than it means to."

SEATED in his quiet study, Mr. Guelpa thought it over. That was his way with a case, and the savage anger of the marquis gave him food for thought. From what the Marquis de Granlieu had told him and from the newspapers, he had a clear picture of the case. A young aristocrat, without fortune, extravagant, had married—of course for her money—a foreigner of great wealth. Even her large fortune had begun to melt away under his fantastic extravagance. At last a halt had been called. The count found himself without money and pressed with debt. He had quarreled with his wife—of course over money. He had left the palace, which was evidently her property. There had been a subsequent quarrel at the ball. And then? Death.

Every class of society, Mr. Guelpa reflected, has its own particular kind of crimes and tragedies. A peasant, an aristocrat, a bohemian, a bourgeois—each has his own way of thinking and feeling; and each seeks an individual way out of the difficulties that environ him according to his education and class-heredity. Suicide is the natural end of the spendthrift aristocrat—too high-minded or timid for crime—who has come to the end of his tether. Had the Comte de Granlieu reached the end?

"I should like to know a little more about that," Mr. Guelpa reflected.

The countess might know something; the count's valet would know more. Always one's valet knows more.

And what had really happened that night at the ball?

What had the marquis really seen and heard in the conservatory? His account had been very clear, but how much of it was due to memory and how much to imagination? One sees, Mr. Guelpa was fond of saying, only what one has a personal interest in seeing.

And if the marquis had seen less—or more—than was to be seen, had he heard what was said?

The ear is a tricky thing. Out of the multitude of vibrations that beat upon the tympanum, it picks only those which may serve a useful end. Mr. Guelpa noticed that the marquis, seemingly, had heard only one voice—the voice of his daughter-in-law raised in anger. Perhaps that was natural. One hears the unusual—the abnormal, Mr. Guelpa reflected; but just because it is the unusual, the mind is tempted to explain it—to interpret it according to personal interest. And the personal interest of the Marquis de Granlieu, both in what he had seen and heard, was to place his son in the best light possible, leaving to the woman the responsibility for a brawling domestic quarrel.

"The other side of the shield," said Mr. Guelpa softly; "I must see the other side of the shield."

That the marquis meant to tell the truth he did not doubt, but, like every one else, he had told the truth he personally wanted to be true.

And that savage flash of anger with which the marquis had, at last, attacked his daughter-in-law—in an accusation that might be deadly—was convincing evidence that he had not told all he knew or, it may be, only suspected.

"Anger is unscientific," Mr. Guelpa said half aloud, "and yet—the marquis is already regretting the outburst of temper," he told himself. "The last thing he wants to do is to uncover a domestic scandal; and yet——"

Upon the corner of the table the marquis had left an unaddressed and unsealed envelope; Mr. Guelpa pushed back the flap and saw the envelope contained a check. Without reading it, he put both check and envelope away in a drawer of the table and went out, locking behind him the door of his study. In the lower hall he took from the rack his round black hat and an umbrella and left the house. On the Place Saint Michel he hailed a taxi.

"Rue Boissy-d'Anglas" he said curtly, and as he settled back on the seat, he added to himself, "Always the valet knows more."

THE apartment which the Comte de Granlieu had taken after his separation from his wife was on the ground floor, with a private entrance—so that he could come and go without being watched by the *concierge*. This touch of privacy made it essentially a "bachelor's apartment," and the count had been living *en garçon*. The valet who opened the door when Mr. Guelpa rang was a fat, pale man of about fifty, quiet-mannered, subservient.

"You are Dominique," said Mr. Guelpa calmly, and he handed him his umbrella and hat, and out of mere habit the valet took it. "And now, Dominique, go to the telephone and ring up the Marquis de Granlieu and tell him that Mr. Guelpa has come here to ask you some questions. The marquis will tell you what to do. When you have had his answer, we will talk."

He pushed past the valet and entered the small *salon*, which opened from the hall. It was furnished daintily—in gilt and rose—and was more like a lady's boudoir than a *salon*. In tall vases here and there flowers were wilting. On a small table was a gold box half-filled with cigarettes; there were cigarette stubs floating in a gold bowl filled with water. On another table, drawn up near the sofa, was a liqueur-case with glasses; the glasses had been used—two of them. The large rug that covered two-thirds of the floor was of dull rose color, with a gold pattern woven through it.

Without leaving the chair where he had taken a seat, Mr. Guelpa studied the room. He had been there only a few moments, but he had seen many things—not only seen but observed them. When the valet entered, he said to him:

"Do not stand there by the door, Dominique—take that seat by the window. The marquis has given you your instructions?"

"*Monsieur le marquis* has placed me at your service," the valet answered gravely

Mr. Guelpa nodded. He watched the valet cross the room, watched the fall of his soft, heelless house shoes on the rug.

"A few simple questions, Dominique," he said pleasantly. "The count was a good master, I am sure, and you have the interest of the family at heart?"

"I have been with the count for fifteen years," replied the valet softly. "He was almost a boy when I came to him, and before that I was with the marquis himself."

"You are one of the family, Dominique," Mr. Guelpa said genially.

The valet's face showed no emotion; he was quietly expectant, as though he were waiting for some commonplace order. He had obeyed Mr. Guelpa's injunction and taken a chair near the window, but he sat respectfully on the edge, leaning forward a little. Mr. Guelpa glanced at the stolid face and then looked away. This fat, pale, humble man might have been made out of putty for all the interest he displayed, and under the circumstances his apathy seemed unnatural.

"One of the family," Mr. Guelpa repeated musingly, and then, without looking up, he said in a matter-of-fact way, "What time did she call last night?"

Dominique was startled out of his apathy.

"The countess?" he exclaimed.

It is safe to say that Mr. Guelpa was more startled than Dominique had been; but he did not even raise his eyes.

"I asked you what time," he said curtly.

"About nine o'clock," the valet answered, after a moment's hesitation.

Mr. Guelpa's comment was:

"I thought it was later."

There was a new look now in the valet's flabby face—surprise, perhaps, and anxiety. His eyes never left the little man, who sat seemingly oblivious of him, staring at the floor.

"And the man? The big fellow? He came first, of course. What time?" Mr. Guelpa asked.

"I don't know."

"But you let him in?"

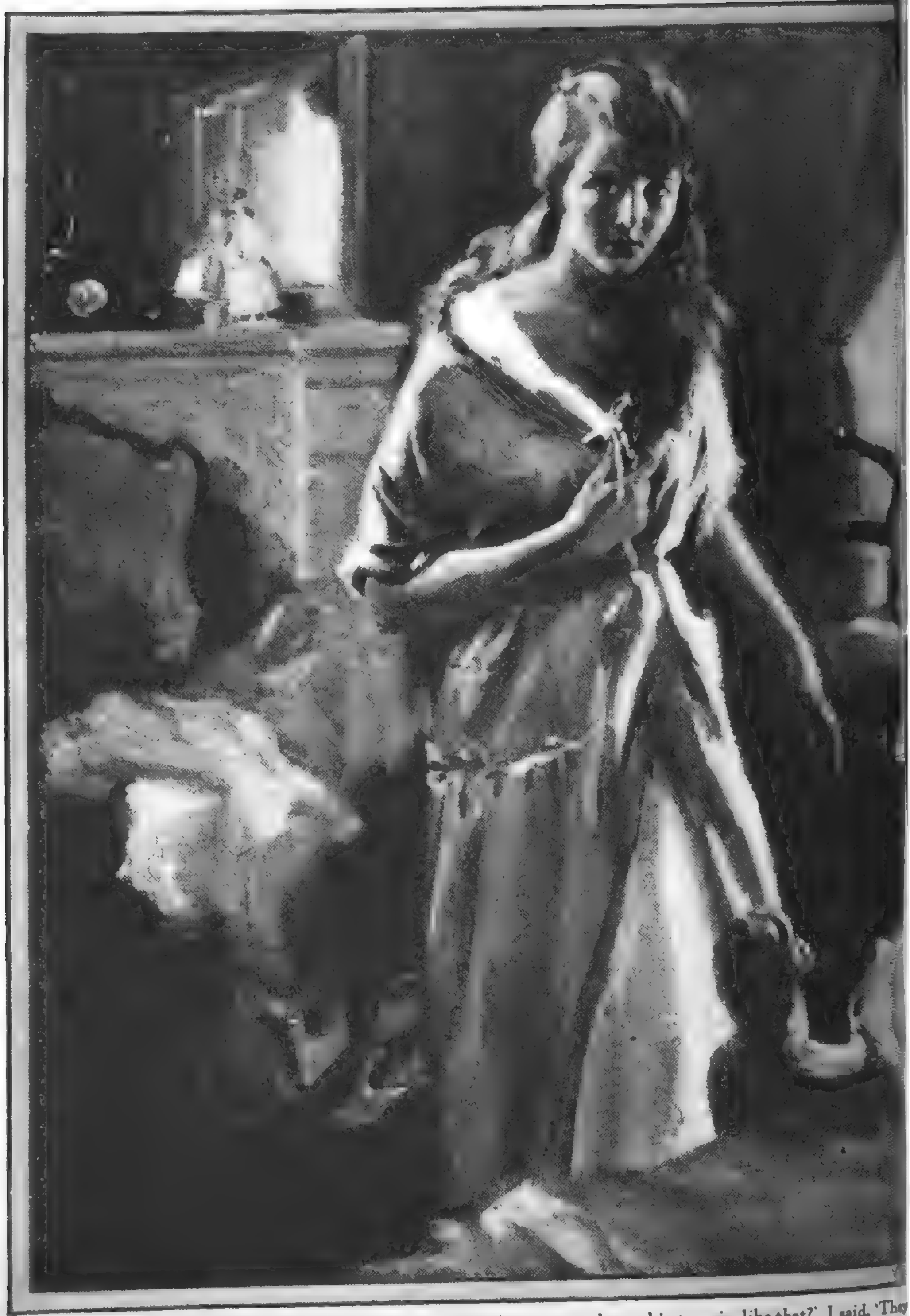
"*Monsieur*, the count admitted him."

"The room is as it was left last night?"

"I have not had time this morning to put it in order," Dominique explained.

"Of course not."

Mr. Guelpa went to the window and



" 'What is it?' she asked, as though she were angry. 'What do you mean by making a noise like that?' I said, 'They

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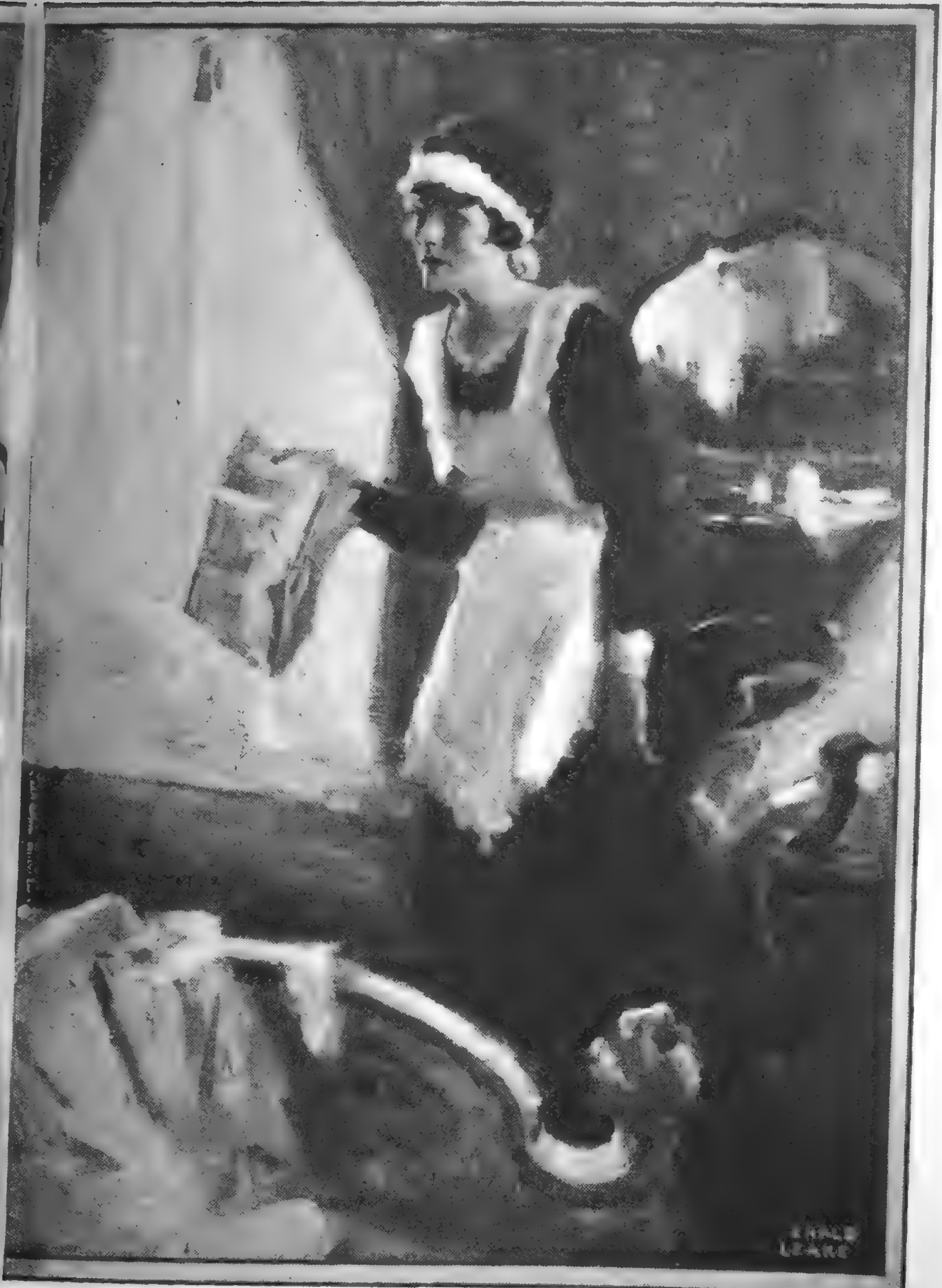


have found the body, *madame.*' She looked like a stone—or something horrible—but she did not try to speak."

drew the curtain aside, letting in more light. Then he crossed the room toward the door and bent down and glanced sidewise at the floor. There were marks on the rug. Here and there the thick nap of the rug was pressed down as though by the sharp little heel of a woman's shoe—a heel that had been wet or damp enough to make a definite print. The marks became fainter and died away as they approached the sofa. These were the marks Mr. Guelpa had seen as he entered the room in his first swift inspection. It was evident a woman had come into the room—probably after nine o'clock the night before, for it had been dry out of doors up till nearly that hour, when a shower of rain swept the streets. Probably she had come in a carriage and merely crossed the wet pavement to the door of the flat, for the shoe had not been very wet—only damp enough to leave a mark for the first half-dozen steps. She was some one the count knew, Mr. Guelpa had reasoned, because she had been courteously received and conducted to the sofa, which in that little *salon* was the seat of honor. Acting upon these deductions, Mr. Guelpa had suddenly put to the valet, the question: "What time did she call last night?" The answer had amazed him, so unexpected it was. Not for a moment had he imagined that the woman who had left these faint and fading impressions of her visit was the Comtesse de Granlieu. About nine o'clock, Dominique had said—just a few moments after the rain fell—though he thought it might have been later.

THE other marks, which had prompted his question regarding the man, were on that part of the floor not covered by the rug. Looked at sidewise, they were clearly discernible on the polished surface of the floor. They were near the door, as though some one had stood there, shifting his place now and then, but never moving far away. The shoes that left those marks had not been out in the rain. The leather sole of the shoe had left no imprint, but clearly defined were the circular marks of the large rubber heels, which had dulled the polish of the parquet.

Who was that man who waited so respectfully near the door? Clearly he was not one of the count's friends; one does not keep a man of one's own class standing, as that man had stood, shifting his weight from foot to foot—evidently waiting. Then, since his shoes were dry, he had entered before the rain fell and before the countess arrived. Had he left before she came?

Mr. Guelpa had finished his inspection of the marks on the rug and parquet; they had told him all they could tell—for the present. He turned to the valet:

"The count himself admitted this man?" he asked again.

"Yes, sir; he must have done so."

"Did you hear the bell?"

"The bell did not ring."

"Then the count must have been expecting him and opened the door?" Dominique was silent. "Who was that man?"

"I did not see him, sir."

"And you do not know who it was the count admitted?"

"No, sir; I did not see him."

"And when you admitted the countess, he had gone?"

"I heard the outer door close, and then—perhaps a moment later—the bell rang," said Dominique, "and I admitted the countess. I showed her at once to the *salon*—or, rather, she went directly to the door. She did not wait to be announced."

"I see. But you were near the *salon* door?"

"I closed it after her."

"What did the count say? Was he surprised?"

"I do not listen at doors, sir," the valet said, straightening up and looking at Mr. Guelpa with a sort of flabby indignation.

"Of course not, Dominique; but the first exclamation—the first words—you could not help hearing them as you closed the door. It is on behalf of the marquis I am asking these questions. What was said?"

"I do not remember what she said. I think she spoke his name."

"Paul?"

"Yes; she said, 'Paul.'"

"Angrily?"

"She seemed to be excited—very. She brushed past me in the hall as though I were nobody at all."

"Quite so," said Mr. Guelpa. "And the count?"

"He was always quiet and polite. He said: 'What! Once more, dear countess, I am indeed honored,' or something like that in his polite way, and I think he asked her to be seated. Then I went away."

"Did her motor-car wait for her?"

"She did not come in her own car, I am sure; otherwise it would have waited for her. She must have come in a taxi."

"Ah, in a *taxi-auto*, Dominique; of course. And how long did the countess remain?"

"I couldn't say. Perhaps a half-hour."

"And the count showed her to the door?"

"The count went with her."

"They went away together?"

"Yes."

Mr. Guelpa showed no surprise.

"Of course," he said. "And the time?"

"I am not so sure about that, sir," the valet answered. "It may have been half-past nine."

"You opened the door for them?"

"No; but I saw them go out together."

"They were talking?"

"No; her veil was drawn over her face. But the count was as usual. He was smiling."

"And he said nothing to you?"

"Only the usual thing," Dominique replied, "to say when he would be home."

"Yes? And he said?"

"He told me I need not wait up for him."

"His exact words, Dominique?"

"He said: 'You needn't stay up, Dominique. I'll probably be late.'"

"Yes," said Mr. Guelpa softly; "he would be late—very late."

He looked round the *salon* once more in his peering way; then he turned briskly to the valet.

"That's all, Dominique, and the marquis will be very grateful to you. Now, two things: The first is to hold your tongue—you will speak of these things to no one, do you understand?"

"Very well, sir."

"And the second is this: We are going to lock up this room and I shall take the key. No one must enter. There is no other key?"

"Only this one in the door."

"Good!"

Mr. Guelpa locked the door and put the key in his pocket. They were standing in the hall. Dominique gave him his hat and umbrella. Mr. Guelpa hooked the handle of the umbrella over his arm and stood for a moment fondling his little round black hat.

"By the way, Dominique, the count loaded his revolver himself?"

"The count had no revolver," said Dominique firmly.

"The one with his crest?"

"Since we have been in this apartment, sir," Dominique emphatically declared, "the count had no revolver. I packed his things. I know everything that was brought here. There was no revolver. In fact, I remember—" The valet paused abruptly. Mr. Guelpa did not urge him; he waited. "I remember about that revolver," he went on intently. "It was in the bedroom—the count's bedroom—and when I was packing I asked him if I should put it in his dressing-case. He said, 'No'—rather impatiently—and I put it back in the drawer of the writing-desk. And there is was left, sir."

"Of course, Dominique," said Mr. Guelpa, still giving all his attention to the little hat; "it was quite natural. You will remember what I've told you. Do not talk of these things—not even to yourself. The family will know how to show its gratitude. Good-by, Dominique. You will remain in the house, won't you—in case the marquis should have need of you? That's good!"

It would seem as though those last words echoed in his mind, for as Mr. Guelpa went slowly down the street, he repeated softly to himself, "That's good—that's good!"

MR. GUELPA took a small late luncheon near the Trocadéro. When he had finished, he walked to the Avenue Henri Martin. He paused in front of the great mansion; the blinds were drawn over the windows; the big iron gates were closed. This, he knew, was merely a conventional tribute to the dead. He rang the bell at the gate. In a little while a servant appeared. He was an old man in the de Granlieu livery. He unlocked the gate and held it ajar.

"Will you take my card to the countess?" Mr. Guelpa asked.

It was a simple card bearing only his name in print; across it he had written, "On behalf of the Marquis de Granlieu."

"The countess is not receiving," the domestic said.

"She will receive me," Mr. Guelpa replied confidently.

The servant hesitated.

"I will take your card."

Admitted into the huge hall, Mr. Guelpa waited, sitting in a carved chair and nursing his little hat. Ten minutes went by before the old servant returned. He was carrying a silver try on which lay Mr. Guelpa's card.

"The countess is not at home," he said gravely, and went toward the door to show the visitor out.

Mr. Guelpa got up slowly and followed, studying the man. He had his own theory of the psychology of servants, which he had developed in one of his little books. Evidence given by a servant, he held, was always to be looked upon with suspicion, not because it was meant to be untruthful but because the personal equation entered into it to such a large degree. The servant sees many things, but inevitably he interprets them according to his attitude toward his master, which is often a curiously mixed feeling of friendliness and contempt—he gets back his self-respect by belittling the one he has to serve; and—it was Mr. Guelpa's theory—the servant usually sees the worst because he looks for the worst. He wondered what he could make out of this old domestic, whose years of cynical servitude had given him an air at once pompous and base. As he paused at the door, looking up into the old face, he wondered what money would do, and knew instinctively that the flunky was reading his thoughts. He took from his waistcoat a folded-up blue bank-note and put it in the ready hand.

"When will the countess receive me?" he asked.

The man smiled and threw open the door.

"The countess cannot receive you," he said, with his cynical smile; "there is mourning in the house."

MR. GUELPA found himself outside the door and, a moment later, outside the iron gates. He crossed the street under the great trees which line the avenue and turned and looked at the house. The old servant was at the gate, watching him with a sort of cynical interest. When he saw that Mr. Guelpa was waiting under the trees, he went toward the servants' entrance to the left of the house and disappeared. A moment later, a maid servant, hatless but smartly dressed in black, came seemingly from the servants' entrance and slipped through a small gate at the left into the Avenue Henri Martin. She carried a letter in her hand, and without glancing to right or left, strolled slowly toward a red letter-box farther down the avenue and out of sight of the house. Mr. Guelpa, fingering a bank-note in his pocket, struck across the road at an angle which would bring him out near the letter-box. He raised his little round hat politely, called her "*Mademoiselle*," and asked if he might have a word with her. She waited for him to go on. She was a quick-eyed, pretty woman of thirty, dark and dainty, with a hint of fire in her.

"The marquis asked me to call—he will be deeply grieved that I failed to see the countess," Mr. Guelpa said. "I think I have my card—" What he took from his pocket was the folded bank-note, and he placed it in the maid's hand.

She laughed.

"Who are you?" she asked.

Mr. Guelpa had a moment's hesitation as to the answer he should give; then he decided to gamble on his theory that the servant-mind, nurtured on sensational newspapers and cheap cinemas, has a leaning toward mystery—that it is a bribe more potent than folded bank-notes.

"I do not think I should tell you who I am," he began, "but I feel you are to be trusted. Indeed, you have already guessed that I am making inquiries—on behalf of the marquis."

"About her?" asked the maid, looking him straight in the eyes.

Mr. Guelpa nodded. There was no need for questions now. Once she felt she was touching the edge of this mystery, which had led the young count to throw his life away, she was only too eager to talk. She had already gossiped loudly in the servants' quarters and Joseph, the old domestic, pocketing Mr. Guelpa's first tip, had sent her out to gain what she could for herself. Whatever disturbed the family injured him. He had welcomed the wealth of the American countess, as all the servants and retainers had done; but the countess herself was looked upon as a necessary evil. She was not of the family; she was an alien with money. The quick-eyed maid, Élise, was his niece; and it was his influence that had placed her with the countess. Personally, Élise was very fond of her young mistress—

it would have been difficult not to love this gentle lady, generous, kindly and sweet—but for Élise there was something stronger than affection, and that was her rising sense of self-importance as she stood under the trees talking to Mr. Guelpa, telling him the things that she alone knew. She spoke rapidly, in a low voice.

"All day yesterday," she said, "I knew something was going to happen. I knew it, but I didn't say a word to any one. She was not herself. She went out in the morning and again in the afternoon, but she didn't take one of our motor-cars. She never went out that way before. And last night there was no dinner. That is, she dined in her room—and she did not dress. When I went in to ask what she would wear, she sent me away impatiently and said she would not dress. And that had never happened before. She was at the telephone in her bedroom, but she did not speak into it until I had left the room. And then, after she had eaten something—some little dinner—in her boudoir, she put on her hat and coat and came down-stairs.

"Joseph asked if she wanted the car and she said, 'No,' she would walk and went out very quickly. It was not very late, because we were all—except Joseph, who was on the door—at dinner down-stairs. Joseph stepped out after her and saw her take a taxi-cab farther down the avenue."

MR. GUELPA did not interrupt this fluent story; so rapidly Élise spoke without hesitation or seeming reflection, it was plain she had talked it all over more than once with the other servants and had it pat on her tongue. She now went closer to Mr. Guelpa and touched his arm with nervous fingers, as though to summon all his attention.

"She had not told me to wait up, but I always wait. Then I knew something was happening. I'm no fool. I told Joseph something was happening. So he sent the others away and stayed on the door himself. He was there in the hall, waiting for the bell; but Joseph is getting old—he left the iron gates open.

"I was in her apartment, making ready for the night, so I did not see her come in. Joseph must have been half asleep, for he heard nothing until the bell rang and he jumped up and opened the door. He did not notice anything. She came slowly upstairs, and if he had had eyes in his head, he would have seen the muddy marks of her shoes across the hall and half-way up the stairs. They were there in the morning.

"Where had she been," Élise asked suddenly, her hand tapping Mr. Guelpa's arm, "in the wet and the mud?

"When she came into the dressing-room next to her bedroom, she dragged her hat off and threw it on the floor.

" 'My God, Élise!' she said. 'Get these things off me!'

"She had a short walking-dress on, but it was splashed with mud. Her shoes and stockings were wet and muddy. Her coat was wet.

"That was all she said—'Quick—get these things off!' and that she wanted a hot bath. And when she came from the bath, I was spreading out her clothes and she said—in the same impatient way: 'Take them away, Élise; I never want to see them again. You may have them.'

"She is always generous in giving away her things, but she had never done anything like that before—not in that way. So I took them away.

"Just as I was leaving the room, she told me not to come in the morning until she rang for me, and when I was outside, I heard her lock the door."

Élise had come to the end of her swift, intense statement. She looked at Mr. Guelpa keenly, waiting for his approbation—or his questions. He did not speak for a moment, fearing that any question he asked might suggest to her something that was not really in her mind but in his own. At last he said,

"You have these clothes?"

"Oh, yes," she answered. "They are mine—she gave them to me."

"Of course they are yours, but I should like to see them."

"Certainly you may," said Élise, "in a day or so—they haven't come back from the cleaner's yet. I sent them this morning."

It was only because Mr. Guelpa rarely showed emotion that he did not groan aloud. The inanimate witnesses that might have told so clear a story were silenced forever. Instead of showing any sign of disappointment, however, Mr. Guelpa smiled across at the quick-eyed lady's-maid.

"You have seen a great deal," he said, "you and Joseph. You have wonderful powers of observation—wonderful! You know," he added, with a touch of mystery which he knew would enlist all her interest, "that I am making certain inquiries for the Marquis de Granlieu. He will be very grateful, *mademoiselle*, and of course all this is between ourselves. You and I understand the necessity of holding our tongues. We must think of the family."

Élise agreed with him; she felt she was going deeper into the excitement of mysterious secrets.

"I dare not stay out any longer," she told him, "but if you let Joseph know, I can meet you."

"Yes—but one second before you go—What time did the countess ring for you this morning?"

Élise gave a start of surprise.

"I haven't told you that. She didn't ring for me. But when we saw the newspaper—the early newspaper with the ten lines telling the count had killed himself in the Bois—I ran up-stairs to her room and knocked and knocked. At last she came to the door, for she had to unlock it, and let me in.

" 'What is it?' she asked, as though she were angry. 'What do you mean by making a noise like that?'

"I said, 'They have found the body, *madame*.'

"She looked like a stone—or something horrible—but she did not try to speak. So I said: '*Monsieur le comte* killed himself last night in the Bois. They have found the body.' And then she rocked to and fro an instant and fell over on the bed.

"No," Élise added, answering, perhaps, the question in Mr. Guelpa's eyes, "no; she did not faint—she just lay there on her face. I went over to help her, but she pushed me away with one hand and told me to leave the room. 'Go, go, go!' she said. 'And leave me alone.' So I went out and shut the door," Élise concluded.

Mr. Guelpa said, half to himself:

"I see. I begin to see."

THE Marquis de Granlieu was sitting in the library of his gloomy old house in the Saint Germain quarter in front of a little wood fire, which hardly affected the eternal chill that hung about the age-old room. Many generations of his family had come and gone in the stately house. Under kings and emperors of France, under three republics, the Granlieu family had known glory and power. Then, little by little, its splendor began to fade. The new aristocracy of money drove in ahead of it. The present marquis had come into his title and what was left of the fortune while he was still very young. His career had been worthy of his ancestors—in a way. Neither statesmanship nor soldiering appealed to him, but whatever was splendid, fantastic and extravagant in the social life of the Third Republic was due to the lavish ingenuity of the Marquis de Granlieu; and he paid for it with the rags and tatters of what had once been the greatest private fortune in France.

As he sat by the little wood fire this spring morning, the marquis realized that at last his life was ending in hopeless disaster.

His married life had been very happy in its careless way. At forty he had married a daughter of the Duc d'Ysne le Châtel, a pretty woman, as charming and irresponsible as himself; and for years her fortune had permitted them to carry on in the old light fashion. But her wealth had gone the way of all the rest. For years there had been nothing left but the old historic mansion in the old quarter of Saint Germain, with its old furniture and old pictures—and the mortgages piled roof-high upon it—this and his debts; for the marquis could still borrow.

An old family does not easily break to pieces; it has many roots and branches and ramifications. One never knows what may happen; so sleek money-lenders had been for a long time willing to gamble on the Granlieu luck. It was upon his son, the count, that they built their expectations; just as upon his son the marquis had set all his hopes.

Even in his boyhood, the count—with his blue eyes and yellow hair and invincible charm—seemed to have come into life to make a holiday of it, not only for himself but for every one about him. Gay of heart, quick of wit, prodigal in love and friendship, the count, before he came of age, was the darling of all the old drawing-rooms of the *faubourg*, even as he was the wildest spirit in the night life of the great city. And upon him the marquis and his wife—faded now and broken in health—built their hopes.

"He can marry any one," the marquis said.

That was quite true; but it was not a woman he had to marry—not some pretty daughter of princely blood with a pedigree going back as far as his own into the heroic past of France; what he had to marry was money. His bride must bring the millions to reestablish the glory of Granlieu. There was no use looking for these millions in the vanishing aristocracy of France. And the marquis looked reluctantly to America. "Why not?" he told himself. American money was woven, like threads of gold, all through French society. And if the Comte de Granlieu was seeking American millions, quite as eagerly the millions were seeking the count. And the two came together inevitably.

The Ryle millions were piled high on the head of a pretty girl of twenty—a bright and flashing girl who had already come unscathed, it was said, through one New York season. Her father's rather plebeian ambition was to crown her not only with money but with a title. And so it came about the marquis negotiated a new loan with the money-lenders, and the count, accompanied by a few friends of his own set, went bithely to New York for the wooing—for all the other conditions of the marriage had been debated and decided and written down in good legal phrases.

Then an amazing thing happened.

The count had gone to meet Eva Ryle with more than indifference. Fragments of his heart were back there in Paris, held by various pretty aristocratic hands, and he had thought of himself as a martyr to his family grandeur. When he saw Eva Ryle, he knew he had never loved any woman as he could love this radiant girl, with her quick American wit, her girlish tenderness, her dark beauty that seemed to shimmer and flash like shadows in a little stream of water. From her brown hair to her little feet she was all grace and youthfulness and—what surprised and captivated him—this daughter of obscure trade-millions was the essence of aristocracy.

And, moreover, the count ascertained that, although she was won, she still had to be wooed. Gossip told him her heart was not quite her own. There was talk of a love-affair with a young man who was not desirable in Mr. Ryle's eyes because he had neither title nor money—was, indeed, merely youth and brain striving to make a success in the legal world. His name was John Faynis. Square of shoulder, athletic, frank of face, kindliness looking out of his shrouded eyes, Faynis had long been Eva Ryle's ideal of a man a maid may love. They had known each other since childhood. During her first season in New York she had seen more of him than any one else; and one night—she was flushed with the triumph of a ball—he took her in his arms and told her his love-story. And Eva gave him her lips. She was very happy. It seemed wonderful to love John Faynis—more wonderful to be loved by him. It was young love; it was swift and impulsive as young love should be, and Eva was proud of it.

OLD Mr. Ryle had not created his wealth by lack of intelligence. He was quick to see the youthful romance and equally quick to destroy it. Old men have a way with them. Mr. Ryle's way was ruthless and not very honorable. He drove John Faynis from his house and made it impossible for him to see Eva or communicate with her. In the hands of this grim man, their fragile romance was easily broken, but the memory of it lingered in gossip and story. It was one of the first things the Comte de Granlieu heard when he came a-wooing to New York: He smiled, for it added piquancy to the situation. Half in love, wholly in love in his light way, with the young girl, he enjoyed this unexpected element of struggle. There was not much the naive and inexperienced girl could do against the most accomplished lover-maker of Europe. His wooing—subtle, fiery, exquisite—swept her off her feet. It was perfectly true that the count wooed and won his wife as well as the Ryle millions. He was justified in the blithe and rather boastful letter he wrote to his father telling of his amusing victory, and the marquis, proud of his handsome boy, did quite an unprecedented thing. He sent to his son's bride the great historic Granlieu tiara which for three hundred years had been the chief treasure of his house. It was known to all the jewelers of the world—so often in the Granlieu generations had it been in and out of pawn. It was the badge of his house. Always on great occasions the Marquise de Granlieu—of the period—had worn it with quiet pride. When the count's letter had come, the *marquise*, at her husband's suggestion—and when did she ever refuse him anything?—had consented it should be given to the new countess who had entered the family. There was only one difficulty. The great tiara had been for years now in the safe of a jeweler of the Rue de la Paix, pledged for a large sum. In view of the coming marriage of the Granlieu heir, however, the money-lenders showed new and obsequious readiness to oblige the marquis. In two days the tiara was redeemed and was on its way to New York, safe in the care of Joseph Durandy, an old servant of the family, whom the marquis trusted just a trifle more than he trusted himself.

The count himself put it on the pretty brown head he loved so well in his light, conquering way—and took a kiss for payment.

THESE were the things the old Marquis de Granlieu thought over with fragmentary attention as he sat by the small wood fire in the gloomy library of the mortgaged mansion in the Faubourg Saint Germain.

The high hopes were fallen and dead. The splendor of Granlieu was dust. The last Granlieu—the heir of five hundred years—lay dead with a bullet through his brain. The little boy he had loved—the golden curls and the proud little face—the boy he had loved——

The marquis felt very old. It was with difficulty he got to his feet. There seemed to be something the matter with his legs. One of them dragged as he tried to walk up the stairs, clinging to the carved handrail. At his wife's door he knocked, and waited until her maid—an old woman in a cap—opened to him. Then he went to the great canopied bed where the Marquise de Granlieu lay. The bed-curtains were drawn and there was light on her face. It was a beautiful face, delicate and old, with pale-blue eyes, dim with pain, and a thin mouth that twitched and would not be still. The marquis lifted her hand and kissed it gracefully, as he had done through the years.

"Will you send Marthe away?" he asked.

And when the old servant had gone, the marquis sat down on the edge of the bed, still holding the faded little hand. They both looked very old, very fragile; but they did not weep or exclaim—even in this bitter hour they carried themselves with grave and serene politeness. They were silent for a while. At last the *marquise* whispered: "My dear! My dear!" and the marquis pressed her hand and then lifted it again to his lips.

"You are looking better," he said gently.

"Does that matter?"

"To me, yes."

"O God!" she cried. "Why did he do it? Why did he do it?"

The marquis stroked her hand as though to quiet her excitement—her old, feeble excitement—and answered her in a voice that was perfectly calm and polite.

"Dear," he said "a Granlieu does not kill himself except for one reason—to preserve the honor of his name."

"Jean!" she exclaimed, calling him by his personal name for the first time in many years.

"Your surprise is natural, but you have misunderstood me. Your son, the son you gave me, could not be guilty of dishonor. Therefore, *madame*"—his voice had a new ring in it, and he straightened up as he spoke—"therefore, *madame*, the Comte de Granlieu did not kill himself." Her pale eyes were wide open now as she lay staring at him. "I ask for no other reason, for no other evidence. Your son could not have been in fear of dishonor, and nothing else would have forced him to take his life."

"Jean!"

"Our son is dead. His honor shall not die!"

He stood up. A kind of energy had come back into his old body; the legs under him were steady; his face had hardened.

"His father will avenge him," he said in a voice as menacing as metal.

Then suddenly he fell upon his knees by the bed and buried his face on the old woman's bosom—where once a baby had clung—and sobbed. She stroked his head, whispering,

"Dear—my dear—Jean——"

Mr. Guelpa visits the spot where the dead count was found and sees things that quite escaped the ferret-eyes of the *Sûreté* police. See November EVERYBODY'S—out October 14th.

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

Daddy's Girl

Should We Always, Without Regard of Consequence, Act in Accordance with Duty as Mass-Judgment Interprets It? It's an Important, a Puzzling Question That Is Asked in This Intense Study of a Man Who Was Confronted by One of the Gravest Problems Any One Ever Faced

By Wallace Irwin

Illustrations by Robert Wesley Amick

SINCE they have found it worth while to invent hard words for the eternal questions: Why do people marry? and Why don't they? I take the liberty of looping back eighteen years in the life of Jolly Jack Corrigan and little Hester Whipple, whose real history is lost even to Bending Willow, where nobody's business is his own.

Few, even among rival mining engineers, called Jolly Jack a fool. He did too well in too many directions to be charged with that. He ate gluttonously and grew Falstaffian at forty, but his big roan horse never refused to carry him up-grade to Hammer Lock, where his stamp-mills flourished, or to carry him back in time to act an uncle's part to the nut-brown schoolma'am with the wild black eyes.

Everybody in the Hammer Lock district called him "Jolly Jack" to his broad face—everybody but Hetty Whipple, who referred to him as "the bear," quite unsentimentally. Among all the mountain rocks, he represented to her the stoutest bulwark. Marriage? Hetty and Jolly Jack would have been abnormal had they never thought of that. Matrimony, in fact, was a standing joke between them, and in sentimental relations there is no gulf like a joke.

Hetty appealed to the good side of Corrigan's nature. This may sound Victorian, but it is true. He had taken his fun where he found it and lived by his own code ever since his Cornell days. At thirty, he had burnt out his matrimonial idea in one consuming blaze which left nothing better than a scar. Therefore, when Hester Whipple came out of the normal school and got herself a boarding-house and a social position and a dictatorship over Bending Willow's noisy brats, it was pleasure unalloyed for Jack Corrigan to take her case in hand and make things easy for her.

He didn't want to interfere with Hetty and her life. When she told him, raising serious black eyes, that she would never marry and that the "betterment of women" was her goal, he laughed aloud, then went away to indulge a fat man's chuckle. It piqued him just a little to think of her marrying. He would miss her girlish cleanliness and her sophomoric chatter about books and pictures.

Hetty Whipple's indifference to Jack Corrigan amounted to something less than aversion, although he repelled her a little. She approved of him as an idea; it was his body that she disliked. Once, at the Odd Fellows' Ball, she refused to waltz with him. "Bears always dance alone," she said. Jack should have been hurt, but he saved the story for the whole camp to hear. She refused to admire his heavy, barrel-shaped figure. She was at the age when youth clamors for its Romeo; in her philosophy there was no place for a Falstaff. Jolly Jack, always intelligent, knew from the first that the schoolma'am of Bending Willow could never consider him in any light brighter than that which an indulgent uncle sheds upon his niece. He was rather pleasant as a friend; as a lover, he was far outside the pale.

But when Orrin Plagborn, a trim figure in whipcord breeches and plaited coat, came riding down from the Tin Mountain district, Corrigan was pleased and proud as though Hetty had been his own daughter. Plagborn had a large interest in the cyanide mills and was a director in several reliable mining companies. He was about thirty-five, rather godlike in exterior. Jack Corrigan felt that he could do nothing better for Hetty than to leave her alone.

That was after the last snowfall of 1902. Corrigan had been called to the Hammer Lock mills, and he realized that he would be gone a month or more; he expected to find Hetty Whipple a married woman when he came back. Upon saying good-by, he had teased her a little, promising her a gold mine for a wedding present—he had meant it, too—but she had been far too preoccupied with her own emotions to give heed to his.

Orrin Plagborn was in town again. Corrigan's last impression, ere he threw his giant bulk cross-saddle on the big roan horse and rode away, was of the sprightly young lover as he came striding down the board sidewalk with Hetty just after school was let out. Jack waved his hand to them, a half-humorous, almost fatherly salute; he might have been saying, "Bless you both, my children!" Strangely enough, Jolly Jack didn't chuckle when he thought of that.

HE HAD planned to be gone a month among the stamp-mills; intuition told him that his absence would drag into the fall. But something he heard in July, spoken from the steps of an assay office just below timber-line, caused him to swear softly as he turned his horse's head again toward Bending Willow. He had just shaken hands with the new metallurgist from the East who was back from the Plagborn holdings on Tin Mountain. The metallurgist had met Plagborn, who had been ever so agreeable, he proudly admitted—fine type of progressive miner. To this Jack Corrigan heartily agreed.

"Married, I suppose," suggested Jack somewhat sheepishly. He had waited in vain for word from Hetty Whipple.

"I'd call him married," grinned the metallurgist. "I met his wife in Chicago."

"You met Mrs. Plagborn in Chicago?"

"Say I did! Charming lady—never been West. Crazy to come and live in the mines, but afraid to bring the children. There's one wise woman! Heard anything about the fire at Richards' sawmill?"

"Not a word. Well, so long. I'll be pushing on to Gallagher's."

Jolly Jack's pushing-on did not stop at Gallagher's, but took him recklessly up hill and down glen, always pointing toward Bending Willow. It was late afternoon when he rode into the little town whose toy church, ugly store-fronts and cluttered lumber-yards seemed to have grown suddenly clamorous with accusing voices. Outwardly, however, he was still the generous Falstaff. He had time to pause at widow Crane's and ask after the boy who had left a leg under a D. & R. G. freight-car. He had time for all things save one. He dared not ask about Hetty Whipple. What had become of her? Surely she would not be in Bending Willow thus late in her summer vacation.

He had tied his horse to the pickets in front of Mrs. Hurley's cleanly painted clapboard house where Hetty had boarded, and he had just laid his hand on the gate when the door opened and Hetty herself came out. She was pink and pretty in summer muslin, but the impression which came to his mind was of a swallow which, in mad flutter toward escape, had battered itself against a window-pane.

"I just *knew* you were coming," she said, giving him her hand. It was thinner than it had been.

Her lips were smiling, but her eyes were still and deep.

"Thought I'd give Hammer Lock a rest," answered Corrigan, with a somewhat forced heartiness. "They ought to pay me to keep away. Thought I'd drop down and take a chance on seeing you."

"I was going to write to you," said Hetty slowly. Her voice died away, but her eyes were crying out to him.

"Anything happened, Hetty?"

"No."

She lied, and he pitied her for it. He looked down the crooked, dusty road leading past a row of little houses, each new and neatly painted. It wound down a mountain glen, at whose farthest visible point a great fir lifted its Gothic spire; it had kindled into flames from the rays of a sinking sun.

"I'm walking over to Moss Rock," said she. "Don't you want to come?"

HE STALKED down the road beside her, silent and understanding. They had taken the spring trail and crossed the first corduroy bridge before she stopped and leaned against a red boulder, too tired to go on. Through all his placid years Corrigan remembered the slim being in a pink-muslin gown, her black hair blowing slightly, her face inscrutable—she had grown into a woman during the two months of his absence.

"I was certainly lucky to find you," he persisted, not knowing how to begin. "I rather thought you'd be away for vacation, or taking your summer course at the normal school."

He might have been talking to the red rock for all the heed she gave him. At last she opened her lips and said dryly,

"I sha'n't go on with the school here in the fall."

"Not tired of the job already?" he asked, with assumed carelessness.

"No. Not that. I'm going to try for something in Denver—that is——"

"Hetty!" He turned and faced her, his voice suddenly gruff. "That's not the reason. Why don't you want to stay by your school?"

"They wouldn't have me after—that is—What am I saying? Jack, please don't look at me that way. Where am I to go? I can't stay. I don't know of any places——"

The eyes that had been still and deep had grown wild. Her hands were beating upon the rock; her lips were drawn with pain.

"There, there, little girl!" murmured Corrigan soothingly, patting her as he would a nervous child. "There's nothing in the world you can't square if you go at it right. That's it. Just lean on your Uncle Jack. We can fix it some way together, you and I."

"I knew we could, Jack. I knew we could——"

She began her speech calmly enough, but her voice rose to a thin wail, then broke in a multitude of sobs. They convulsed her body. Suddenly she relaxed and sank to her knees, back bent, face hidden in her hands. Poor, repentant Magdalen, weeping in the shadow of a blood-red rock, pines whispering mournfully overhead!

Corrigan let her cry it out, and when at last she was still, he crouched beside her to lift away her hands.

"Hetty," he said in the voice of authority, "have you talked to anybody else about this?"

"No." She raised a face swollen and stained by tears. "Once I thought of going to Mrs. Hurley or the preacher's wife. I couldn't do that. What would they say? Then I packed my bag to go back to Iowa. But my father's a religious man. He wouldn't let me stay in the house a minute after——"

Her chin quivered, and tears sprang again to her eyes. Corrigan patted her shoulders again with a: "There, there, there!"

"What's become of Plagborn?" he asked coldly, after a pause.

"He's gone back to Chicago, I think. I suppose you know."

"That he's married?"

Her dark head drooped a little in acknowledgment.

"My God, why didn't I stay here?" he stormed.

"Those questions help when it's too late," she replied in a tone of bitter irony.

"Too late!" he growled. "It isn't too late."

When she taxed him with questioning eyes, he went on in a level tone:

"You've got to act now, Hetty. Time's precious. You realize that, don't you?" It was as if she hadn't heard, so he blundered on: "You can't be too choosy. There's no time to go out and find a husband good enough for you. I'm about all the loose timber there is lying round the camp. Hetty, if you're willing to tie up to a human misfit, fat and lots too old for you——"

"You mean—marry you?" Her eyes

were frightened, her fingers clutching the red rock as she looked at the big body that was always rather repellent to her. Her look must have hurt Jack, but he plodded on:

"I'm no dove, and not much to look at. If I held a thing against you, I'd be a worse scoundrel than Plagborn. The game now is to be sensible—get married and move away. I've got a chance to represent the company in New York; we could go to-morrow."

She seemed to appreciate his chivalry a little and to relent toward him; but her eyes were on the sunset which had grown cherry-red and ashen purple, like cooling lava.

"That's doing a lot for me, Jack," she admitted.

"Nonsense!" His attitude had something of the young lover's eagerness as he leaned over her and said: "I'm selfish; that's all. Giving you up hasn't been any snap for me."

She studied him before her reply:

"You've never been in love with me."

"How do you know?"

"Not much, anyhow. But suppose you should meet the woman — the one who counted? The danger's over with me; but with you——"

"I'm inoculated." He laughed rather bitterly.

"And—and you want to try it with me?" she asked humbly.

"You'd make me very happy," he confessed; but when he tried to kiss her, she drew away.

He stroked her hand when they went down the dusky trail together. The touch was a little more than fatherly, and Otto Keefer, of Keefer & Glotz, local butchers, spied them from the top of his meat-wagon as he drove in with the week's supply. So the town got it that Jack Corrigan had about fixed it with the schoolma'am.

An hour after the wedding, which was next morning, Corrigan repeated the question:

"Where is Plagborn?"

"They say he's gone East," replied Hetty, coloring a little. This was the last time that Corrigan ever mentioned the man by name. But he knew that Plagborn was still at Tin Mountain. The metallurgist of Hammer Lock had told him so.

WHEN Jack Corrigan left the mines for good and came back to New York with a pretty little wife, it was cause for rejoicing among the relics of a famous class that remembered Jolly Jack's brand of humor in undergraduate days. Once again a dweller in the sleek apartments of Manhattan, Corrigan lapsed very rapidly into civilization. He became popular in a minute, as the saying goes, and his frontier breeziness, plus a dress suit, gave him a place among the picturesque *raconteurs* of the city. He carried an atmosphere of carefreedom. His public appearances gave an impression of one who had passed his fortieth year without any backward look of regret.

As a pair, the Corrigans were satisfactory to their new world, a comparatively large one. Publicly, Hetty learned to take on some of Jack's gay manner. Privately—well, what are doors for but to shut domestic secrets from the street? There was another door—that was the trouble—a door forever locked between Jack Corrigan and the woman he had taken so hastily as a matter of convenience to her. They never quarreled, the Corrigans; occasionally it would have been better if they had. But sometimes in her eyes would gather cold clouds, brooding and hostile. They were accusing, too—for whom? Certainly not for Jolly Jack.

Early in February, 1903, Hetty was confined, and Jack's familiars at the Cornell Club toasted him for a citizen who never failed to do the humorous thing.

"Isn't it just like Jack," they chuckled, "to be the father of twins?" And they roared again.

As comic features, however, the Corrigan twins proved a disappointment. It is all very well to dramatize the remarkable family resemblance of Mike and Ike or Mrs. Katzenjammer's boisterous duplicates. But when the twins are born girls and lovely, it is hard to do much with them in the colored-supplement sense. Besides, to be mirth-provoking, twins must look, act and dress as a unit. The Corrigan twins were as different in coloring as Sweden from Japan; and as a difference of complexion has made many a war between the races of mankind, it is safe to say that dyestuff goes into character.

Twins are occasionally born this way—without any marked physical resemblance. The reason, which is biological, does not concern us further than that Irma and Frances Corrigan seemed to have nothing in common save the same parenthood and the same birthday.

Jack Corrigan seemed to take prosperity and popularity and parenthood with the light-heartedness peculiar to his rôle. It gave him a genial feeling of responsibility to hear the little things scampering round the house, to appreciate his share in the responsibility of their upbringing, to realize that these greedy, shrill-voiced little animals would one day be beautiful women with hearts to win and bodies to adorn.

Of the two, Irma was the prettier. She had soft silver-gilt hair, naturally inclined to a baby-curl which never quite forsook her head. Her eyes were obvious and laughing, her mouth a rosebud. Hetty worshiped the twins, but she favored Irma a little. Frances, who was a study in apricot tones, had been quiet from her birth. Her eyes, sad and grave as a Hindu's, looked through and through.

They were in their fifth year before Jack Corrigan proclaimed his preference, even to himself. He had been too busy with the accumulation of friends and money to give more than casual attention to his little tribe. Occasionally, between office-hours and dressing-time, he would peer into the nursery to see the pretty picture of the young at evening prayer. Frances, her dark head obediently bowed over folded hands, would be God-blessing her parents quite correctly and according to form. Irma, squatted restlessly, her roving blue eyes unable to concentrate on anything, would be beseeching the Almighty in rapid tones, "God bless mother and make daddy give me a new doll for the one Frances broke and a new stove with tin kettles."

Then there came a Sunday afternoon when Corrigan, risen from his customary nap, heard loud squawkings from the playroom. The twins, it seems, had chosen aviation as grounds for their quarrel.

"I'll go up and you'll go up, and muddie'll go and Rosie and Susan," proclaimed Irma's shriller tone. Rosie was a stuffed pig and Susan a nurse.

"An' daddy," announced Frances decisively.

"Not daddy!" objected Irma.

"Why not daddy? Aren't daddy just as much in the air-ship as anybody?"

"No. He's too big. He'll break it."

"Then I won't go—I won't!"

"You're a very bad girl! When muddie and Rosie and Susan and God calls you up there——"

"I don't care. I stay with daddy."

"You're a very bad girl! Daddy will spank you."

"I don't care," insisted Frances's stubborn tone. "I'm going to be with him. I'm daddy's girl."

"Not any more than I am!"

"I am so!"

"Aren't so!"

"Am!"

"Aren't!"

When Corrigan came in to quell the riot, he was grinning; but it was Frances whom he picked up in his arms and fondled roughly, as a bear might fondle his favorite cub. That was his moment of choice. Then it was that he noticed how the dark little girl was growing to look more and more like her mother.

There was a certain something in Irma's cherub face, winning though it was to the majority, which woke in Corrigan an instinctive aversion. He always told himself that he was quite impartial, that he was giving his affection share and share alike. But it was Frances who found a place in his lap a little later when they were up evenings and he was giving them more of his attention.

"You oughtn't to play favorites so openly, Jack," objected Hetty one night in her just and quiet way. "Irma might notice it. And she's very fond of you."

"Pshaw!" laughed Corrigan.

"You aren't a little partial?" asked Hetty, searching him with her deep, still eyes which never lost their look of accusation.

"Share and share alike's my motto," Jack blustered, whereupon he ostentatiously kissed the blond twin and granted one of the favors which she was always prompt to ask upon occasions of relenting.

PARENTAL favoritism is usually an unreasoning thing. If Corrigan preferred Frances because she was serious and condemned Irma because she was flighty, he might easily have been riding for a fall. Serious girls too often turn out to be dull prigs while flighty ones are just as apt to make good wives and merry ones. Frances Corrigan was no prig—that was sure. She grew into an athletic young animal, wholesomely fond of the boys and not without a sense of fun. A little later she developed a taste for reading, and she lost nothing in Corrigan's regard for that.

"Daddy's girl" became something of a nickname in the household. Undoubtedly she had what the Freudians would call "the father fixation." Naturally, as the primitive woman turned her eyes toward the patriarch, head of her house, the dark twin sought out old Jack Corrigan, a final judge in everything. Not that Frances was indifferent to her mother. Family love was born in her, and if her affections leaned somewhat to the male side of the house, it was but the fine instinct of a woman in the making.

"I guess I'm getting a little bit old," Corrigan complained to her half jokingly one evening.

"Isn't that thrilling, daddy?" she cried, borrowing lightness from his tone. "That'll give me an excuse to do nothing but take care of you!"

"You won't want me poking round after you're married," he told her.

"I'd never call it 'poking round.' "

"Why not?"

"Just because—well, you're my daddy."

He gazed at her so long that she laughed.

"You look so funny—just as if you were going to deny parenthood!"

What imp, then, tempted him to the question:

"Fanny, suppose I wasn't your dad, but just a nice old gentleman round the house?"

"Do you think that's funny? You'll have me crying in a minute."

"But just suppose," he went on.

"Well, I suppose that's all you'd be. Just a nice old gentleman round the house. And I'd have to call you 'Mr. Corrigan.' "

"But I'd still be the same person——"

"Yes. Or—no; you wouldn't. You'd be sweet and everything else. But fathers—well, they're different. If you were just a perfectly terrible person, whooping and carousing around, I'd be the sort of little daughter that waits at the saloon door to take you home. The king can do no wrong; and that's because you're my——"

"Your father," he muttered.

She saw that she had hurt him somehow.

"If you only knew how satisfied I am with you, old parent! And I love you like fury!"

This was a great comfort to Jack Corrigan, who never again approached her with the dangerous theme.

Next day she went to college. Corrigan hated to see her go, more on her mother's account than on his, he said. Hetty hadn't been very strong that summer, and with Frances's cheering words in his ear, he had one pitifully selfish thought. He would never be quite alone in the world. There would always be Frances to rely upon.

But if she knew——

There was always something bearlike about Jack Corrigan; he bore no resemblance to the snarling, growling bear of nursery myth—he was more like the plump, good-humored and satisfied bruin who, in the fall of the year, stuffed with rich herbs, seeks out a pleasant hollow tree-trunk and the joys of hibernation. That, too, isn't quite fair to Jack. He was never a dullard, never a comatose bourgeois, but bearlike he remained in all his business, social and domestic activities.

Upper West Side society, which welcomed the Corrigans at card-parties and dances, enjoyed the sight of his huge magnetic person. He played bridge cunningly, losing neither money nor temper. Or he would be found among the oldsters, making merry along the wall while the youngsters clung together, contorting according to modern ballroom requirements.

But sometimes the door between Jack's life and Hetty's would open a crack, whereupon he would close it softly. Once, when they were returning from a late party, his wife said, speaking out of the trancelike state into which she often sank,

"It's like being on another planet."

"What is?"

"Being here and leaving so much—out there?" Her gesture went instinctively toward the West.

"You've never learned to care for me much, have you?" he complained.

"If I only knew—" She was unable to finish. Jack had slammed the phychological door in her face with some laughing comment on neighborhood affairs in West End Avenue.

DURING the term of Frances's absence at Bryn Mawr, the Corrigans went out sometimes as sponsors for the fair-haired Irma, who flirted steadily from six to three, lived on her restless feet and talked much without saying anything. She was away a great deal that winter, blowing featherlight from week-end to week-end. She returned home only when the dance-vortex was in her neighborhood or when a change of attire required it. Then she would entwine Corrigan's bull neck with wheedling arms and acclaim him among fathers. He got used to her caresses, even encouraged them, because she was her mother's adoration.

How often he wished that he could render her the same quality of affection which he gave to Frances quite without asking! But it was of Frances alone that he thought, early in the new year, when Hetty's health began to decline. He wanted to write to her, confessing his premonitions and the loneliness which seemed already gathering round his days. Instead, he sent her affectionate, cheerful letters, gossiping of everything under the sun save the one important topic.

Hetty's health was failing, and Hetty wouldn't admit it. They had put her to bed, and she had irrational moments which came with fever. More than anything else she worried lest the girls might take alarm, that she might become an invalid to interfere with Irma's house-parties and Frances's freshman Latin.

IT WAS nearing Easter, 1921, when certain eminent physiologists met in Corrigan's prosperous West End Avenue apartment. All of them, save one, wore impressive morning coats, a style of costuming affected by physicians consulting over a wealthy patient. The one exception was small and wrinkled, and rather shabby in his suit of gray. He, it proved, was the Eminence among eminent physiologists. His the voice of decision, the power of veto.

After a half-hour of furtive talk under a cloud of rich Havana smoke—Corrigan had opened his humidor to them—they filed out to Corrigan and permitted the shabby gray Eminence to do the talking.

"The case is inoperative, Mr. Corrigan," he said in his sour little tone. "Vitality very low, heart-action irregular. Operation? Sorry. We can't permit a patient to die under anesthetics."

Corrigan was sorry, too, but he shook hands stolidly at the door and tiptoed back to Hetty's room.

The nurse, who had been sitting by the bed, rose and went out, a tactful admission that Corrigan should be alone with his wife.

The sick woman, propped among the pillows, had turned her hollow eyes toward a bedside table where from silver-framed photographs smiled her twins.

Corrigan, as he took the chair beside her, had a feeling that she had changed in an hour. Her cheeks were fleshless, her lips ashen. The hair, which straggled in a thin braid across her pillow, was grayer than his, despite the fact that Hetty had just passed her fortieth year.

He was afraid she would ask what the doctors had been saying, and he was strengthening himself for a cheerful lie when she laid a skeleton hand in his great paw and said,

"Jack, I don't think I've ever told you how good you've been to me."

"Pshaw!" was all old Jack could say; her speech surprised as well as touched him. Never before in their married life had she thanked him for his act of chivalry which had united them. "We've been a team, and that's a fact," he blundered, trying to make his tone casual.

Her eyes were wandering a little as she said:

"I took you away from your mountains. I don't think you ever liked New York."

"Het, old girl, what are you giving us?" He had quite regained his humorous manner; but her hand was burning hot as it lay in his big clasp. "Ask all the world."

"I know what they say. But I've lived with you."

Jack made no effort to reply; his voice was gone.

"You were always like a bear," she said feverishly. "A great bear. I thought of that the first time I saw you. You were so clumsy and good-natured and strong. People called you jolly. I often wondered——"

A look of terrible earnestness came over Jack's broad face.

"Wondered what, dear?"

"How you might destroy."

She closed her eyes. His unconscious mind, cunningly alive, turned sharply on the picture which it had held in shadow for years. The sharp tang of pine-needles was in his nostrils; they had crackled and dried underfoot, a slippery carpet to the very edge of the cliff. How like hell the cañon yawned below! A branch cracked. Dead logs and boulders rolled boisterously into the river.

"Did the doctors come?" asked Hetty, staring suddenly like one caught napping.

"Oh, yes—yes!" Had that fool nurse been talking?

"They needn't come again, Jack. I'm dying."

"That's nonsense!" he declared almost fiercely. "You're taking a grand brace. We'll have you in Palm Beach pretty soon."

"No." Her eyes had grown hard; her jaw was set. She had become a woman of iron. In the contraction of her pupils he recognized the work of morphine which had been given her to allay the pain.

"No," she insisted. "You don't need to lie to me, Jack Corrigan." Then, softening momentarily: "I haven't wanted the girls to know. But I think you ought to send for them now."

"I have. I wired Frances this morning to 'phone Irma at Radnor and bring her on. They're coming on the noon train. Sort of thought it might cheer you up, having them round," he added, determined still to evade the truth he dare not face.

"I see," she said in a rough, thin voice he hardly recognized. "I may live till they come. But you owe me something, Jack. You oughtn't to let me go without telling——"

"Hetty!"

"I haven't been ungrateful—I haven't! But you hadn't any right to keep it from me."

Jack Corrigan shuffled his great body until the chair creaked under him.

"Keep what?" he asked thickly.

"Don't lie to me. I'm dying. Tell me the truth, Jack! Why did you kill my—kill Orrin?"

His mouth fell open.

"How did you know that?" he asked.

"They found his body," she explained, with a peculiar calmness, "nearly a year later. It was at the bottom of a cañon near Tin Mountain. They said it was a landslide. I remember how you left me at Denver the week after we were married."

Jack Corrigan was unable to meet her eyes; yet a small voice, cold and distant as a question from the tomb, was asking again,

"Why did you kill him?"

A great bear, half breaking from the trap, Corrigan rose, bulky and savage, mad with the pain.

"Yes, by God!" he growled. "If you want the truth, you shall have it. I killed him. I broke him barehanded and threw him over the side."

The confession died on his lips as quickly as it had come. With silence came remorse and that caution which had kept him silent so many years. Hester had demanded the truth—a dying woman's right—and it had rushed from him like froth from a wounded grizzly's fangs. He saw her lying there, her jaws locked, her eyes closed. He was blaming himself for the cruelty of his hot confession when again she looked at him and asked,

"Why?"

"Can't you see? Haven't you any feeling in the matter—after what he did to you? Were you going to let him walk away scot-free, go strutting back to his friends and family in the East?"

"I know all that. But—" She sighed, too feeble to say any more.

Once or twice he tried to speak to her, but she had settled back into the calm which precedes death. Finally he gave it up and tiptoed out of the room, well aware of the words that would have followed that significant "but." "I know all that, but nobody should have hurt the man I loved. I've lived with you, Jack, and been as good a wife as I knew how to be. But I have never ceased to love the father of my children, the man who should have been my husband."

Near the telephone at the front of the apartment, he found the trained nurse waiting for him.

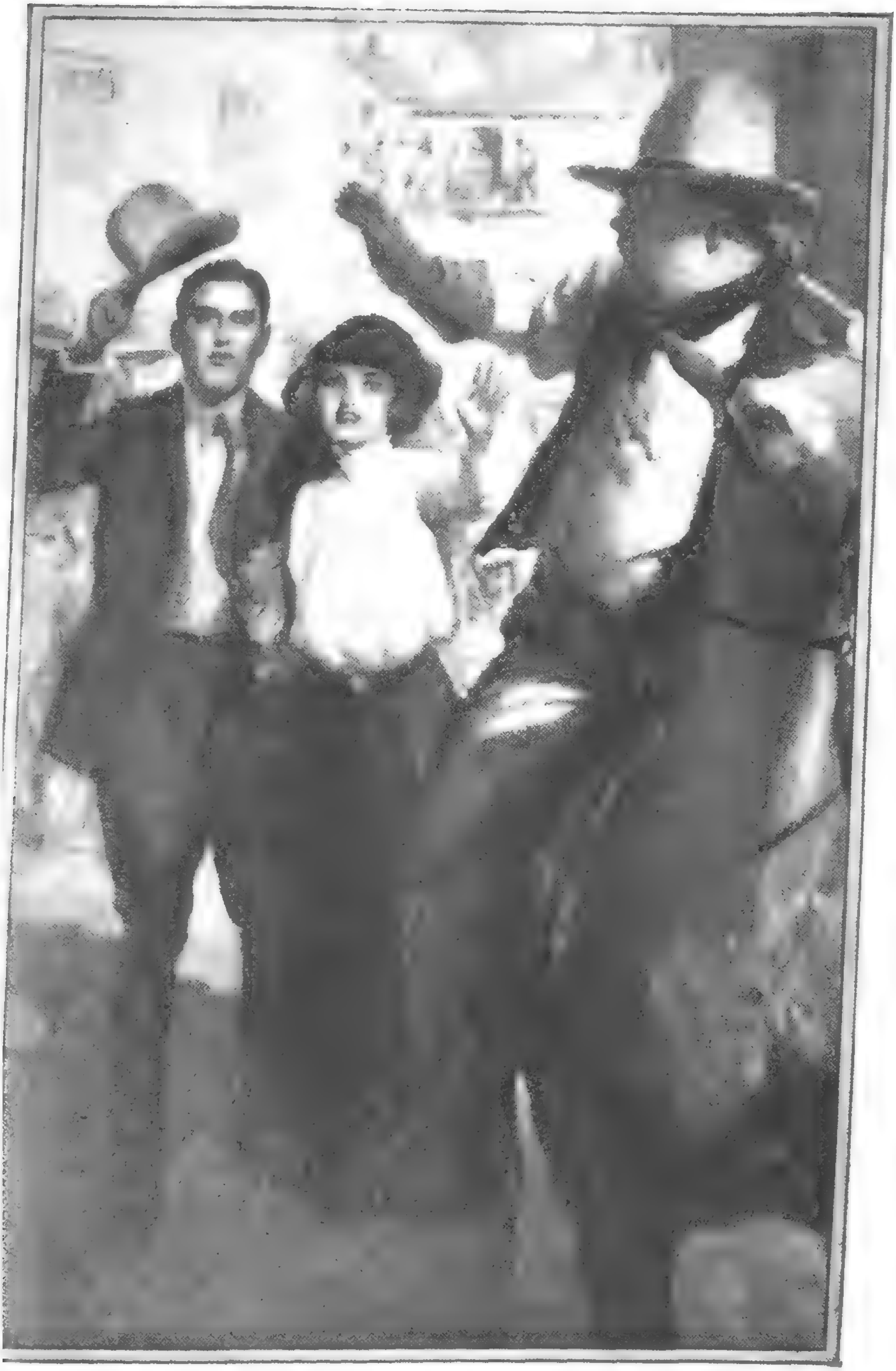
"I've called Dr. Christy back," she whispered.

Corrigan only nodded.

THE arrival of the twins, shortly after that, was characteristic of their relative understanding. Frances was the first to come. She had brought Irma from Philadelphia, but the blond twin had lost her mink neck-piece somewhere in the Pennsylvania Station; after all, a neck-piece was a neck-piece, so she had delayed to find it.

Corrigan was not sorry, for this would give him an opportunity to tell Frances first.

Her cheeks had paled to ivory as she gave



Jack waved his hand to them, a half-humorous, almost fatherly salute; he might have been saying, "Bless you both, my children!"

him her good, straight mouth to kiss and clung to him for an instant, more afraid, more pathetically afraid than he had ever seen her before.

"How bad is it, daddy?" she whispered.

"Come in here," he said, and passed his arm about her waist to lead her into the library. He had often brought her there to read to her or scold her or give her first lessons in mechanical drawing.

To-day she stood by the window, pale and very erect as she gazed out upon the dirty snow piles of West End Avenue. Suddenly she turned.

"I can't seem to think, daddy,"she told him. "She was so well when I went away. What could have happened?"

"She hasn't been well since late fall," he growled. "Things got worse when you left—after Christmas vacation. She wouldn't even consider an operation——"

"Operation!" broke in Hetty's daughter. "You never told me a word!"

"She wouldn't let me tell you. She fooled all of us into thinking she was getting well. Then last night there was a collapse, and this morning we called a consultation."

"What did they say?" Only her pallor and the agonized twining of her fingers betrayed her.

"Dr. Shorn—he's the big specialist, you know—said it was hopeless."

"Does mother know?" asked the girl.

"I didn't have to tell her. She gave up this morning. She's been a little delirious, but she knows." He paced off the rug three times, carefully following the border, before he blurted out, "Your mother is dying!"

He took her into his arms and drew her to his knee as he had done so often when she was a crying little girl.

"I'll have to—I'll have to cry a little," she wailed softly.

"Yes; cry, darling," he said; then, loosing one of the bitter imps from his hidden self, he added, "There's plenty of it to do in this world."

But an instant later she raised her face, calm with an inward serenity he had always adored in her.

"Daddy," she whispered, "we've got this thing to do—all of us. We mustn't break. We'll work it out together, because we belong to each other—she'll want that, daddy. Oh, my dear daddy——"

He had pressed her bearlike against his great body, quivering uncouthly, when fate knocked at the library door—three summoning knocks. The trained nurse stood there, her face inscrutable, an expert in deaths.

"Would you come to Mrs. Corrigan now?" she asked, with tremendous quietude.

TOGETHER they went down the hall to the sick-room. Dr. Christy, a tall, gray, saturnine figure, leaned over the bed. A window had been opened wide, as if to release the troubled spirit.

Poor Hetty lay among her pillows, just as she had been when her husband left her to sleep; but her mouth had grown shapeless with the struggle for breath which sent her breast heaving as though the imprisoned lungs would burst. Dr. Christy, with a terse, secretive gesture, motioned the family to Hetty's side.

At that instant Irma, belated by her tremendous trifle, burst into the room.

"Mother!" she cried hysterically. "Mother darling, can't you speak to me? Don't you know me?"

The dying woman's face, preoccupied with pain of a soul in labor, lay rigid and aloof as a mask. The mother's favorite, as uncontrolled in grief as in joy, called the name again and again. She might have been shouting into the Black Gates, where even the echoes are voiceless. Frances was standing still, her eyes shining, her finger on her lips; was she listening for those unresponsive echoes?

Quite unaccountably the face on the pillow seemed to gather bloom; it was the last glow of fever dying with the body it had devoured. Hetty's eyes opened—insane eyes, staring wide with pupils like needle-points.

"Who's calling me?" she asked, her voice unnaturally strong.

"Mother dear—" Frances had taken an emaciated hand, but poor Hetty was beyond sight or hearing.

"My baby!" she babbled. "If you had seen him—your father. To leave him dead like that— And you never saw him! He was beautiful like you—like——"

Her jaw fell, and her eyes rolled up with the last torment of her crucifixion. Jack Corrigan turned away, cold with a fear that dwarfed everything else — even his pity for her.

At that instant Irma ran to the bed and threw herself, sobbing, on her knees. But the gaunt woman, propped among pillows, had neither look nor word for her favorite daughter.

"She's dead!" It was Irma's voice, torn and uncontrolled.

Jack went back to help Frances lift her sister from the floor. He did not look toward the bed, but the glance he gave the dark girl was humble and appealing. There was no response in her troubled eyes. They had the deep, still look which Hetty's had held that day when Jack had ridden back to Bending Willow.

Surely, in that momentary confidence, thrown disconnectedly from dying lips, Hetty Whipple could not have conveyed much to the girl who had lived thus far in ignorance of her origin. Yet what of the look in Frances's eyes when she walked alone out of the death-chamber, her face as blank as mountain snow? Jack Corrigan made a piteous effort to follow her, to call after her, to beseech an explanation. Instead, he stood dumb. How much had Frances guessed from her mother's words?

IT WAS five days after the gas-driven pomp of a modern automobile funeral that Corrigan completed arrangements for a trip to California. Fear was growing big within him, and with it an impulse to escape fate by running away from it. A change of scene would be good for them all, he argued through a hundred sophistries. An apartment whose atmosphere was still heavy with death was no place, he told himself, for young girls with all the effulgence of life before them.

Actually, he was tormented by a desire to be stirring, to leave certain ill memories behind him and to divert the minds of Hetty's twins from thoughts which might even now be quickening in their hearts. Five days seemed to have cured the downy Irma of her grief. She had screamed and fainted at her mother's graveside, but the following morning she had consoled herself with a dressmaker and plans for a frivolous mourning frock. What had gone on in Frances's heart, he had been quite unable to tell. The deep, still look had never left her; yet it had given him a world of comfort to have her sit on the arm of his chair, as she used to do, running her fingers down his collar or patting him possessively. Then he would look up and find that her eyes were upon him, studying, studying. An embarrassment had come between them, making it quite impossible for him to ask the question which he knew was in both of their minds.

He came home early on the afternoon of the fifth day. There was his own packing to be done, and certain drawers of his desk must be purged of every evidence of a past which had died with Hetty Whipple. He had the futile hope that the destruction of little harmless relics might clear the record forever. Surely, Jolly Jack had not grown morbid. Yet he seemed to be forever listening to catch some murmur from Hetty's dying lips.

The apartment smelled of moth-wax as he came into the wide hall; again he seemed to sniff the scent of crushed pine-needles, to hear the roaring of loose timber in the gulf below the cliff-edge. In the drawing-room beyond his study he could hear voices.

Peering in, he saw Irma and Frances, black-clad figures crouching over a yellow chest. He recognized the chest as one that had stood in Hetty's room ever since he could remember; and the sight of it open to the day, its lid yawning to vomit scraps of silk, paper, trinkets, photographs, filled him with an unreasonable nervousness and irritation.

However, he had assumed his mask of paternal indulgence as he stepped into the room and permitted Irma to cling wooingly after her filial kiss. Frances hardly looked up from the rummaging that had absorbed her.

"Daddy dear," pleaded Irma, loving him with her greedy, childish mouth, "don't say you couldn't get the tickets!"

"I got 'em all right," he agreed, fighting against his blind instinct to brush her aside and address himself to Frances. "We leave Monday on the Twentieth Century."

"We'll go straight to Del Monte, won't we, daddy? At this time of year——"

"Straight to Del Monte," he agreed, but he was gazing down into the contents of the box.

"What's all this, Fan?" he asked, forcing carelessness into his tone.

The girl was kneeling. At his question, she lifted her face, brown, innocent and very sweet. The scrap of old lace she held across her hands took on the aspect of a sacred relic.

"Some of mother's things," she said. "She told me last fall that if anything happened——"

"There'll be plenty of time for that when we get back," he broke in somewhat impatiently. "There's a lot of packing to be done in two days."

"It won't take long," she assured him, and went tranquilly on with her work of exploration.

She seemed always to have that—tranquillity. An inner reserve of it. Where Irma's flighty little ego was always seeking, never finding, flitting without direction, coquetting with facts, Frances's mind moved straight and true to its mark. Jack Corrigan, a helpless tower of a man, stood over her and wished pitifully to give his confidence for hers. She would understand, and, understanding, help.

He stood there just an instant, pulling his mind together as one would the mouth of a sack, writhing with a load of mischievous secrets. Then he turned and stalked into his library.

NO SATIRIST, whether bitter or kindly, could have called him "Jolly Jack" as he threw his bearlike body into a swivel chair and unrolled the top of his old-fashioned desk. He, too, had relics to overhaul and destroy, that they might pass into nothingness, like the body of poor Hetty Whipple. It took some searching among the bright brethren of his key-ring before he had selected the one he wished. It had been five years since he had used it.

There was little enough of importance to be found in that drawer, once it was open. Several bundles of business papers, mostly pertaining to properties he had made over to Hetty—these had been in safe-deposit for a long time, and Jack had taken them home one day to look them over. There were two scrawled work-sheets from income-tax reports which Corrigan had filled out for Hetty. Out of the jumble fell a faded satin rosebud—a silly millinery thing. How came it there? Oh, yes; it had been one of many stitched to Hetty's first imported gown. Jack had treasured it bashfully.

He found other things among the papers, things that looked up at him like the faces of dead children, or things that lurked and stung.

A cheap and frivolous photograph of the Coney Island variety fell with a brittle clatter on the blotter before him. What a jubilant honeymoon token! Hetty and Jack had posed for this in Denver the week of their marriage. Jolly Jack had been himself that day—or had managed to appear so. The camera-man had seated him on a wooden donkey, a fuzzy silk hat over one eye. Clinging to his broad belt was Hetty, smiling girlishly out of the picture.

How they had frolicked on the brink of tragedy! The night after that picture was taken, Corrigan had left her in an obscure boarding-house to steal away into the mountains. He was not to be gone for long, he had taken pains to inform the little bride, left quite alone and friendless during his week of absence.

Jack Corrigan sat pawing over the papers in the drawer. It was hard to believe that Hetty was gone. They had wiped out so many scores; he had grown to love her, never losing consciousness of a certain grudging quality in Hetty's yielding to him. She made him remember the man whose name was never spoken; Hester had given her heart to a scoundrel, and Jolly Jack had made the best of a bad situation. Plagborn seemed to be always standing in the background, a conquering ghost. What unseen will had forced Hetty, already at the Black Gate, to that half-betraying speech? Could the man, her betrayer, be waiting beyond the shadows, still powerful with the claims he always had upon her?

Corrigan growled, and his thick hand was like the fore paw of a grizzly as it scratched among the papers. A battered letter, already yellowing with age, came up under his savage pawing. He snatched out at it and held it up to his quick, small eyes. No need to read it again.

He crumpled the letter, then tore it into bits. Thus the he bear wreaks vengeance on the garment of a tormenter who has evaded him. He was rummaging again in the memorial pile when the voice of Frances, low and distinct, floated in from the big room beyond.

"Irma!" The call was significant, insistent.

Through the half-open door he could see a picture. Two graceful, black-clad figures crouching among varicolored scraps which poured like lava out of the camphor-wood box. Kneeling there on the golden-brown carpet, their gestures seemed to characterize them, accentuate their difference. Irma had spread a strip of yellow silk across her slim forearm and contemplated the effect, her head a little to one side. Frances had raised a small unmounted photograph between her palms.

"Irma!" she repeated, and her voice clamored for attention.

Irma turned her vain little head, eyebrows slightly raised. Between her fingertips Frances held out the unmounted photograph to pass it across the yellow box.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Irma, as soon as she had taken the print and her round blue eyes were upon it. "Why, that's mother!"

CORRIGAN had now forgotten the problems of his desk. His ears were straining toward the dialogue in the next room.

"Doesn't she look sweet and young?" resumed Irma, after a pause. "What's that funny little building?"

"It must be her schoolhouse," explained Frances's deeper tone.

"But who's that beside her? He's very nice-looking."

Jack Corrigan's heart stood still while Frances, rising, went round the box to peer over her sister's shoulder.

"He's handsome," she agreed.

"I didn't know they dressed so well in the mining camps. Mother seems to be very fond of him."

"Yes."

Frances, her eyes temporarily diverted, was gazing down into another pile of scraps. Finally she looked up and held out her hand for the photograph.

"Let me see."

She studied the picture carefully for a long time, and it was Irma who broke the silence.

"I wonder why she kept it so long?" She had lowered her voice, but her whisper was audible to the man in the next room.

"I wonder," said Frances carelessly.

She crouched—absorbed in her thoughts, the brittle snap-shots crackling in her hand. But Irma was again busily plundering the camphor-wood box.

"How per-fectly lovely!" she cried, and rose to hold one of Hetty's old tea-gowns against her breast.

"It's simply falling to pieces," she rippled on. "But look at the real lace! I don't think mother would mind—do you?"

"I don't know," said Frances coldly.

Irma rolled the garment under her arm and left the room, probably in search of scissors. An instant later, Frances came into the library. Corrigan braced himself in his swivel chair and made a show of a fatherly smile. He motioned her toward him, but Frances took an armchair a few feet away.

Her dark eyes looked too large for her little face as she sat there, and she seemed so worried and helpless—never before had he thought of her as helpless. The air was electric with questions. In the embarrassing moment before either spoke, Corrigan had about made up his mind to tell Fanny everything. She would understand.

"Daddy," she began, "I was wondering—about this picture." She leaned over and laid the unmounted photograph on his desk. He had never seen it before; it took but a glimpse for him to recognize Plagborn's graceful, self-assured figure beside Hetty Whipple. "Hetty and Orrin, May 11, 1902," scrawled across its face, made it easier to identify.

"Oh, yes," said Corrigan vacantly, staring down into the smiling faces.

"There's something about mother there—she seems so young." The girl's eyes were bright with sudden tears. "Who was Orrin?"

"Just one of the fellows round the camp," he replied vaguely.

"I know." She was persistent. "But what was he?"

"A lover of life, my dear."

"Just what do you mean by that?" she asked.

"Nothing much. Only, your mother was very popular—naturally she would be. The younger crowd at Bending Willow took a lot of pictures."

"Do you know, daddy," confessed his daughter by courtesy, "I never thought of mother as a girl—like that. She couldn't have been much older than I am now." Jack Corrigan sat, an inarticulate lump. "Haven't you any pictures taken about that time?" she asked. He wondered what prompted the question. He thought of the undignified tintype taken of the newly wed Corrigans in Denver. He preferred her not to see that.

"Oh, shucks!" he objected. "I was never young like those people. At Bending Willow they called me the 'dancing bear.' I never went in much for picture-galleries."

Frances rose and plucked the photograph from his desk. By her manner, by the whole tone of her interview, he realized that she had come to his library to say more important things. A thin curtain had fallen between them, half revealing the truth of Hetty's dying words.

"Daddy," Frances asked, "I wonder if you'd mind my keeping this picture?"

"Why not?" His tone was impatient, almost rude. He was struggling with an impulse to call her back and tell her everything as she left him and went down the hall toward her bedroom.

Corrigan rose and walked heavily into the drawing-room to gaze upon Hetty's treasures, scattered across the rug around the camphor-wood box. A bitter memory of his married life came to him as he gazed down upon the significant trifles. He had taken Hester on an impulse, to save her from a frightful situation. How had she repaid him? She had kept Plagborn's picture in her treasure-chest, just as she had cherished his ideal in her heart. At that instant, Jack had finally made up his mind to tell everything to Frances—Irma, somehow, didn't count.

THE Corrigans were to leave for California by the Twentieth Century Limited on the afternoon of Friday. In those days of preparation Frances had worked feverishly, setting the house in order, while Irma had gadded among her friends, enjoying herself in an elaborate series of good-bys. Frances had gone about like one possessed by a demon—an industrious demon—prodding her always on to some new task that would mean forgetfulness. Those were bad days for Jolly Jack Corrigan, who could not bear to meet the look in her eyes. Her face had grown stern and a little haggard.

He had intimations of her sleepless nights—Jack was resting none too well. At three o'clock on Friday morning, he peered into the hall and saw lights blazing under her door. Poor child! He sympathized with her uncertainty. He himself was dangling, all astruggle, like some poor wretch slowly hanged. The light under her door attracted him, filled him with an impulse to knock, to throw himself on his knees at her feet and implore her forgiveness—for what? For having avenged himself on the man who would have destroyed her mother?

Corrigan tiptoed down the hall and stood a long time listening at her door. Many times he raised his knuckles to knock, but courage failed him. He went back to his room and paced the floor until daylight. By then, he had made up his mind strongly, irrevocably. He would tell Frances at the first opportunity. She knew too much to be put off forever, and it wasn't fair to deceive her like this. Fatherhood, after all, is merely a biological accident—thus he argued. It's the protection and the shelter and the mutual affection between youth and age that make parenthood genuine. What was Plagborn to Hetty's daughters? Less than nothing. Jack had been the real father—in the ethical sense.

It would be easy to make Frances understand, he decided in that early-morning watch. Ever since babyhood she had been the one to run to him with her troubles. He had answered all her questions; she had relied on him in everything. Calm, sweet, reasoning Frances would understand, once she knew how unworthy Plagborn had been to be called "father." The thought of her origin might shock her at first, but he realized that modern women, scientifically trained, think tolerantly of the things which would have stunned the pallid Victorians.

Jack dressed himself, strong with the resolve that he would talk with her right after breakfast, when the trunks were out of the way and they could have a few vacant hours before lunch and train-time. He wanted his girl—he never thought of Irma that way—to start her new life with no haunting mysteries to dog her steps. She wanted the truth—she had hinted at it several times since her mother's death. He realized the danger to himself, but held it lightly.

He never felt the comfort of her and the need of her more than he did that morning when the three sat down to their last breakfast in the West End Avenue apartment. Frances's eyes were heavy, but Jolly Jack

At his question, Frances lifted her face, brown, innocent and very sweet. The scrap of old lace she held across her hands took on the aspect of a sacred relic.

pretended not to notice them. He gabbled breezily on, awaiting the confessional hour. After his second cup of coffee, he was hiding behind his paper, rehearsing his speech, when the telephone-bell rang and a subordinate from the New York office held him for a quarter of an hour with reports on unfinished business.

WHEN he had done with this, he was annoyed to find that Frances had gone down to the storeroom to superintend the putting-away of family boxes. Jack Corrigan retired to his library to chafe and smoke and growl over badly printed mineral reports. Nothing so unnerves the criminal as a stay of execution. It was nearing noon when Frances at last came to him; she was carefully dressed for the street.

"Oh, going somewhere?" he began clumsily. "I thought maybe we could talk a little."

He threw away his dead cigar and studied her as she took a chair beside him. He wanted to take her on his knee and comfort her, as he had always done in minor crises.

"I came to talk, da—" Her hesitation on the beloved nickname filled Corrigan with a sudden cold fear. He recalled her joking threat of a few years back. If he wasn't her father, he'd become just an old gentleman round the house. Instead of her daddy, he'd be nothing more to her than Mr. Corrigan—any Mr. Corrigan.

"What was it you wanted to say, Fan?" asked old Jack, swallowing hard.

"I've been thinking all the time about what mother said when she was—going." Frances bit her lip and her trembling chin proclaimed the struggle, but she went calmly on. "I know she was delirious, and people aren't responsible when they're that way——"

"She was responsible," broke in Jack gruffly. A voice behind him seemed to be urging: "Tell her now! Tell her now!" But he was silent.

"Why shouldn't we have been told?" she asked impetuously. "Why should we have been raised like this, never knowing the truth about anything? Hadn't we a right to know about our father?"

"Fan, I'm your father," Corrigan protested huskily.

"No," she persisted. "But because you misunderstood something your mother said——"

"I thought I'd misunderstood," she broke in. "I prayed that I had. But the minute I saw that picture, I knew. That's our father—Irma's and mine." A sudden shame overcame him, and he sat like a lump, a fist under his double chin. "Isn't it true, what I say?" Her question pierced the silence like a needle.

Corrigan cleared his throat.

"Yes," he said.

"Then why were we never told?" resumed the prosecution.

"Your mother thought it would be better as it was."

"Why? There wasn't—there wasn't any disgrace?"

Corrigan shook his head and braced himself for a merciful falsehood.

"No, my dear; nothing could have been more honorable. But your mother was peculiar about some things. She preferred you shouldn't know."

"He couldn't have been dead long when you married——"

"How do you know he's dead?" broke in Corrigan, surprised out of his caution by the girl's amazing knowledge.

"His body was found under a cliff in the summer of 1903."

Corrigan's jaw dropped; his eyes protruded from their fleshy sockets. It was as though the corpse of Plagborn, smeared with blood, newly broken against the rocks, had risen to accuse him.

"It was in a wild part of Colorado, and it had been lying there nearly a year before the miners picked it up," went on the girl's rapid tones. "They said it was an accident. He been warned not to go that way, because there were landslides in the mountains."

"Who told you that?" he asked finally, out of an arctic silence.

Frances rose and swayed over to the bookshelves. At a low corner, under the shadow of a davenport, was a row of thick volumes with "Mineral Reports" stamped in gilt on their backs. Corrigan had brought them from Colorado and had seldom opened them. She chose the volume next to the end, and when she had raised its cover, a shred of newspaper fluttered to the floor.

With the agility of a mountain-beast, Corrigan fell upon the accursed scrap. He knew it by heart. He had dropped it in that book eighteen years before, intending to destroy it as soon as Hetty's back was turned. And there it had lain all these years to bide its time and tell tales:

PLAGBORN'S BODY FOUND.

HE GLANCED stupidly at the well-known head-lines and allowed his eyes to travel down the column whose details were no news to him. He was numbly grateful to find that the report had been torn away at the end so that there was no further biographical data than, "Orrin W. Plagborn, who comes of a prominent Chicago family, was married in——"

"I found it there last summer," said Frances, standing beside him, unrelenting as an executioner. "Mother and I had come to town to do some shopping."

"Did she see it?" asked Corrigan, his paws now fast in the cruel teeth of the trap.

"I showed it to her—I don't know why. She wouldn't tell me anything, but it seemed a dreadful thing for her—I couldn't understand why. She went to her room and was dreadfully upset. I wonder if that was the beginning——"

"I think so," he agreed, but it was with the voice of a man already breaking into old age. "You've found everything, Frances," he added pitifully.

"No." She resumed her seat, and it was hard to realize that this logical being, ruthless and impersonal as she tore the story from him, was the same girl—"daddy's girl," he had called her an hour ago. "No," she insisted; "there are some other things I've got to know. Why did you want to keep the news of—of my father's death from mother?"

"Why?" Corrigan tried to swallow. "Well, if I had told her at the time of his death——"

He could have bitten out his tongue. What had he said? But Frances was too quick for him.

"At the time of his death? Then you knew of his death at the time. His body wasn't found until a year later."

"Don't look at me like that, Fan!" he implored.

"You were there!" she whispered, bending forward, her eyes terrible. "You knew he was dead, because you were there!"

The great bear, half breaking from the trap, rose to his full height, mad with the pain.

"Yes, by God!" he thundered. "If you want the truth, you shall have it. I killed him. I killed him with my bare hands."

Frances had covered her face. Corrigan stood above her for an instant, his huge body trembling all over. His little Fan, his favorite, his adored, had covered her face to blot him out, a monster.

"Fanny dearest"—he was blubbering like a schoolboy—"it wasn't right for you to get it all twisted in your mind like this. A few facts are worse than a pack of lies. Please give me a chance to tell you——"

He had taken her by the wrist, but she struggled away, panic-stricken.

"Don't! Please don't!" she pleaded. "You killed him. Ah, let me go away!"

"If you had known the circumstances—" That was another thing he shouldn't have said.

"Oh! There were circumstances?"

She was looking at him again, a command in her inexorable eyes. What could he say now? In his own defense could he brand the foreheads of Hester's children?

"Men go wild over property up there," he said roughly. "Money and liquor."

She had arisen stiffly and was holding out her hand.

"There's only one thing I'll ask of you now, da—Mr. Corrigan. Would you let me have that picture of my father and mother?"

His fingers were unsteady as he picked up the unmounted photograph and handed it over to her.

"You're not going, Fanny?" he begged humbly, like the old man he had become.

"Yes," said she unbendingly. "Of course Irma and I can't stay here any longer."

"I've got so used to you, Fanny," he told her, wringing his big hands. "I can't see you away from me long."

"That's very good of you," replied the level tones. "But after this, of course we couldn't stay here—could we? Don't think I don't appreciate what you've done."

"But where will you go? What will you do?"

"Back to college. I'll make my own way. Other girls have done it."

She turned toward the door, the limp photograph waving in her hand. For an instant she hesitated, and a blind hope told him that she would relent. Her eyes softened toward him just for an instant; then she hurried out.

"Fanny!" he cried after her, beating his breast.

There was no response. He threw himself down on the davenport and wound his arms round his head.

Distantly, out of his stupor, he had heard voices in consultation. There had been hurrying feet, then the sound of a door closed, the bang of finality.

Like a fallen colossus he lay there, dreaming stony dreams. In his youth he had loved a woman, and she had repaid him with ashes. Then, in middle age, he had devoted his years to a generous deed. He had not loved Hetty as men should love. But she had given him children—Plagborn's children. Had a father ever worshiped more deeply than Jack Corrigan worshiped the dark twin who but now had turned to a stranger before his eyes?

Œdipus, thou wert a happy king, being blind!

A broken colossus, Jack Corrigan lay until twilight stole into the room. All sensation had left him. He had a feeling that he would die there, his soul to follow poor Hetty's. Would she, too, turn away from him?

Then there came light footsteps on the rug. He was half roused by warm breath against his cheek and two slim arms twining about his shoulders. His heart revived an instant as he reached out and strained the gentle body against his breast. Frances had relented and come back to him!

"Fan," he whispered, "I knew you'd understand! My girl! Daddy's girl."

"This is Irma," said a sharp voice in his ear. An electric light clicked on.

He turned on his cushions and saw the yellow curls, the blue eyes so coaxing and so shallow.

"Daddy," she whimpered, "Frances shouldn't have done that. I won't go with her. I think she's been horrid. I don't want to leave you, daddy!"

For the first time, Jack Corrigan drew her to him with a fierce paternal love. It was the instinctive embrace of a lonely animal, hungry for its kind. He held her away from him for an instant, trying to read into that vivacious, pleasure-loving face something more than a desire to be sheltered and fed and clothed luxuriously.

"I'm glad you want to stay," he said, and, as he stroked her hand, he studied its dimpled knuckles and oval nails—a hand that loved to lie on a velvet cushion and have dainties dropped into it.

"You're the only one, daddy," she coaxed, snuggling again, "the only daddy I've ever known."

Thus easily did she renounce her blood. And as she was speaking the words, he had a feeling that never before in all her careless life had she looked so much like Plagborn.

Coming in November

Pandora, Pugh and I By Walton Hall Smith

Along comes a new author with a likable adventure story, a reminder of Richard Harding Davis

The Melody in F By George F. Worts and Grace H. Wiley

How incongruous forces sometimes help us to our goal

Giants By Henry Francis Granger

Another of those pleasing "little journeys back home"

So It Goes By James Oppenheim

Perhaps a lesson for mothers or a sermon for sons, but at bottom a heart-gripping story

And there will be other short stories in—

November *EVERYBODY'S*—out October 14th

The Stirring

A Small-Town Parson's Prescription for Reviving a Dying Congregation Which His Metropolitan Brethren Might Do Worse Than Copy

By Nelia Gardner White

SARAH BRUCE bent tired shoulders above a redarning in David's gray sock. The September sunlight came warmly through the window toward the church, touched the soft black of her hair with its beginnings of gray, and made its stern, even parting a little pathway of silver; it made clear the small, tired lines about her eyes, and it claimed kinship with the cheery, upward curve of her lips. It rested with pale-yellow gleam on the motto Aunt Meg had sent that hung over the old walnut bureau which had served as sideboard and linen-closet for twenty years. It came back over the round oak dining-room table with its two plain white plates and its squat sugar-bowl with the ugly purple asters strewed over it; and then it paused to play in splotchy shadows over the slim, worn fingers of Sarah as they pushed the shining bit of steel in and out, over and under, in and out, over and under.

And as her needle went weaving, her mind began to weave a picture, too—a picture of David. She could hear him now, back and forth, back and forth, in his little study off the parlor; from the bookcase, past the desk, to the window—from the window, past the desk, to the bookcase. And in the picture she made of him she was conscious that he looked older than he had ever looked. There had always been such indomitable courage in the squareness of his chin, such splendid assurance in the keen blueness of his eyes. But now the courage seemed not so firm; the eyes were not so clearly untroubled and unafraid. There were lines where there had been no lines before, and his shoulders were an old man's shoulders. Something was wrong, and she did not know what it was. She had a sharp stab of regret for the four years she had just spent away from him. It had been worth while—there had been no other way to put the children through college. But David had been alone so long. It almost seemed as though she must become acquainted with him again. Their letters had been long and intimate and close together—still, there were so many things she didn't know. And one of the things was what was troubling David.

The days had been so full before Chloe was married. There were so many small, loving stitches to be taken, so many things she must say to this daughter going out on the great adventure, so many housewifely tasks in preparation for the little wedding. It seemed as though there had been no time through the summer to know David. She had been conscious that something was wrong, but she had pushed the knowledge away under the multitude of household duties. But Chloe had been gone three weeks now. Sarah felt angry that she hadn't made David want to come to her with the trouble long before. There had been a talk once when they were first married. They had decided that they should keep reserved a small corner of their mind for thoughts that they did not care to express even to each other. And, because of that decision, that reserved corner was nearly always clear. Each being willing that the other should have a fastness of his or her own for retirement, they found they rarely needed to use it. They were very close.

But this thing he had not told her. She had tried through these three weeks just past to make him feel her love and sympathy. On the night after Chloe went, she had thought he was going to confide in her. They had sat on the front steps together—lonely in the absence of the children, and yet curiously conscious of the richness of their lives because of those children. They had talked of them a little; talked of their babyhood—such a little while before, it seemed!—talked of the outstanding incidents of their growing years; talked of little very personal things—things that they would not have spoken of to an outsider, but which meant growth of their children's souls; talked of their pride of Kathleen's success, of Philip's engineering ability, of David, junior's first published story, of Chloe's new happiness.

It had been a night of reminiscences to stir all the tender heart-chords. But David's own trouble still stayed in his corner of reserves.

The pacing ceased. He was probably standing by the window now, staring out at the big oak showing now the first deep autumn red through its green; or perhaps he was kneeling there beside the worn old swivel chair, silently praying. Once she rose and started to go to him. But she sat down again—perhaps he did not need her yet. The blue-white of the china egg gleamed out through the boundaries of another hole. Then the study door opened softly.

"Where are you, dear?"

The "dear" was a habit through the years, but Sarah quickened to it even now—to the tenderness with which David always managed to invest it, as though it were a name new-coined to call her by.

"Yes, David," she said, and went to him. She carried the stockings with her, that he might think she came casually, that he might not be hampered in his confidence by the importance of the moment. She sat down in the little rocking-chair that was always in the study just for her and threaded her needle with undue deliberation. David began rather abruptly.

"I'VE been pretty much of a failure, haven't I, Sarah?" he demanded. He seemed not to want her to answer, for he went on hurriedly: "I know I have, but it never came home to me so hard as it has since you took the children and went up to Syranac. When we were at Coryville, the Smith-Jamieson feud was ended and the young people of the church really waked up and the folks there all got so they gave from their hearts instead of from tight-fastened money-bags. And at Gorham those two dying churches were united and made to live and to care about living. Do you know, I believe I patted myself on the back about those two towns?"

Sarah smiled disbelievingly. David patting himself on the back!

"I gave myself credit—actually I did, Sarah—for that work. But when you went away, I began to see that I'd been a pretty big fool in my pride. You must have done it all. You did do it all—you were the life of the Sunday-school and the Young People's meetings, and you kept the Ladies' Aid from splitting over whether Mary Slocum's chocolate loaf was better than Selma Ryer's orange layer—oh, you did it—every bit, Sarah!"

If David hadn't been so earnest, Sarah would have laughed. David—why, she didn't know a minister anywhere who really *worked* as David did!

"I've never minded not going to any larger place. I haven't particularly minded the small pay, except for you and the children. I was meant for a small town. I understand small-town people, and I've always thought that I could be useful with them if I could anywhere. But here in Arden Center it's been different. It's been like throwing acorns against a stone wall. I haven't accomplished anything in the last four years. If anything, the town is worse than when I came."

"Oh, no—David!"

"Yes, it is. The place is dead. And I feel as though I'd helped to kill it. They tell me they commonly had three hundred out to children's day exercises. There was a boys' club, too—it's a poker hangout now. I can't reach them, Sarah. And I'm not going to have another chance to."

"Not going to have another chance, David?"

"They've sent a petition to the district superintendent to have me transferred."

He was trying to keep his voice bravely optimistic, but Sarah ached at the pathos in it.

For a moment she could not speak—her heart was so full of pity and love.

"Why, David, are you sure?" she said at last. She had given up all pretense of darning now. "Why, I never knew any one —*any one*, dear—that didn't like you!"

"No one likes me here. They're all too intent on their petty little squabbles and bickerings to like any one. That's the great trouble with Arden Center—it's like a poison running all through the place. They gossip so. Not friendly, natural gossip, that really belongs to a neighborhood by right—but mean, bitey, ugly, suspicious gossip. Why, sometimes through these last years I've felt as though I were being squeezed to death. And it's been infinitely worse not having your sane, happy self to come back to. I can't even say it's a beautiful Sabbath but what some one says, 'Yes; Deacon Byrnes thinks so—he's getting in his hay to-day.' Things like that tell on you after a while. If I ever mention an act of neighborliness that some one's done, they'll say, 'Yes; but did you know—' And they'll pile enough sins, past and present, on top of that act of kindness to bury it beyond hope of ever getting out again. Gossip! It's the only thing that's survived in Arden Center. But if gossip can survive, it seems to me it shows there's some life here if one could only get to it. I've tried—I've tried with all there is in me. Sarah, I can't touch them. And I love this place, too. I love the hills and the river. I've planned to take you with me to all the beautiful places I've discovered about here—we've had so little chance to go about together through all these years. And I love the people here, too, Sarah—or, if they'd only let me, I would. I can't bear to go!"

SARAH dropped the stocking on the floor and went with loving swiftness to stand beside him at the window. She laid a hand on his arm.

"You're just discouraged, David. It's hard to see that you're accomplishing things during the actual accomplishment. But I'm sure you're mistaken—I know you're wrong about the children and me. We really never did much to help—I've been realizing lately how very little that we might have easily done. Think of Andy McFadden and old Mrs. Wainwright and the Geer girl. Who won those stars, I wonder? I know it's hard. Small towns seem so hideously narrow and unkind sometimes. They don't take time to be just, because they do love news—and there's not much news for them except what they make here among themselves. I don't really believe they've sent a petition."

"Yes, they have. Dr. Kriegel wrote me himself and told me. Very kindly, of course, but he thought I ought to know before the next quarterly conference. I wouldn't mind changing if I could feel I'd done something—but I haven't. I feel as though I'd failed the Lord and you, too, Sarah."

"You've never failed me, David," she said, very gently but surely.

"If I could only stir them once, just once, before I go! But there's nothing to stir them—only gossip."

Sarah smiled at him. She knew he was desperately grieved, but she did not want him to know she knew it. She even managed to make her eyes smile, too—with real humor. David and the children always depended on Sarah's smile in trying moments.

Sarah did not know that, but the smile was always ready.

"Then stir them with gossip," she said, almost lightly. He stood there a moment, staring out of the window. An oak leaf fluttered down to the browning grass. Sarah, looking up presently—he was so long silent—saw that something new had come to him, something that brought the determination back to his chin and the twinkling assurance back to his eyes. She thrilled to it as a girl to a youth's ambitions.

"Dear," he said at last, "I *knew* you wouldn't fail me—that's just what I'll do!"

She was puzzled for an instant. Just what did he mean by "that"?

He saw that she had forgotten what she had said.

"You said, 'Stir them with gossip.' And I'm going to, Sarah—I'm certainly going to! I'll be going in a couple of months now, but I'll give them something to think about after I'm gone. When I get the plan all worked out in my mind, I'll tell you—no—you might discourage me—think it would count against me for unrighteousness, and the Arden Center folks might hold it against you, conniving with me in it. But I'm going to do it! I may be a failure, but I'm going to make this dead wood burn for a minute or two, anyway."

Sarah turned to go presently. At the door she paused. She wanted to say how great was her love and faith, that she would make up by the greatness of her love for the lack of response in others, but words eluded her.

"David," she said then, hesitantly, "David—no matter if you are sent on—you'll never be a failure to—to me. I used to think, some years ago, that perhaps you were. I thought you, with your brains and your energy, should be in some big church. I never said so, but I'm afraid I thought it. But the older I get the bigger you seem to me, David. I can see things a little clearer now—bigness of manhood and bigness of church property don't necessarily go hand in hand, as I used to think they did."

She paused a second longer, afraid of saying too much and yet wishing to make it quite clear to him how much she cared and understood. She saw that his shoulders unconsciously straightened, and she gave a little sigh of relief and slipped away to the kitchen to get supper.

THE next morning he said,

"I'm going calling to-day—out in the country."

She wondered at his smile as he said it—it was so full of a chucklingly humorous secret.

She heard him rummaging round in his study before he started, and asked him if there was anything he had lost.

"Know where that little black note-book is—the one that came in the mail the other day? It's an advertisement for something or other, but it's just the right size for some notes I want to take."

She found the note-book and kissed him good-by.

"I won't be home till supper-time," he said. "I have a big day's work ahead." Again that puzzling smile.

He went out every day that week, coming home tired at night, and he studied the little black note-book a great deal. It was Sunday before she had even an inkling of what he was doing.

"I'd like to tell you," he said once, with a little laugh, as he turned the pages of the book. "But I don't want you implicated."

There weren't many out to the Sunday service. Sarah, looking at empty pew after empty pew, wondered not at David's sense of failure. They had had such a pretty, homelike little church at Gorham and it had always been filled, but this was such a huge barn of a place. No carpet, except a narrow strip of green-gray that did not reach even across the narrow aisle. No cushions, no flowers, a plaster-cracked wall, and musty gloom everywhere. Sarah herself had brought a branch of lovely colored oak leaves and put them in a vase on the organ, but they were such a little spot in that great bare sanctuary. Mrs. Engstrom whispered eagerly to Mrs. Marley behind her while the first hymn was being given out. Three boys in the back seat chattered unreproved, and now and then you could hear the click of their marbles. Old Mr. Briggs sat alone in the front seat, professedly that he might hear better, but already he was settling his back to find the most comfortable position for sleep. It was depressing. But David did not seem at all low-spirited this morning. There seemed to be the light of pleased anticipation in his eyes.

His sermon was brief and inspiring—though Sarah could not see that any of the gathered few had been much inspired. The last hymn was sung a little draggingly, and heads were bowed in expectation of the benediction. Sarah's head drooped also and her eyes closed, but instead of "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," David began to speak quietly and yet with a certain impressiveness that brought all the heads up.

"There is an announcement I must make this morning," he said gravely. "It grieves me to make it, and yet I feel that it is necessary. I am glad to say that such things rarely occur in the history of our church. However, one of our members has been guilty of grave misdemeanors. I will not mention the name, but it has come to the time when I feel it only right that this member be brought before the body of the church to answer the charges that have been made. In a trial of this kind, a majority of church members must be present. Will you please see that the word is circulated that such a trial is to take place Saturday night in this church? We have a hundred and thirty-two members, so there must be at least sixty-seven present to make the trial effective. I am inexpressibly sorry; but we cannot allow such a blot to remain unnoticed upon the records of our church."

With that he raised his hands for the benediction.

Sarah confronted him accusingly when he came home from his out appointment that night.

"David," she said, affecting sternness, "David, I find no mention in the church discipline of a majority of church members being necessary for a church trial, but I do find a line which mentions written notifications to all persons concerned, an announcement of the counsel for the defense and a few other trifles you may have overlooked."

David answered her as solemnly.

"My dear, I trust curiosity to overpower desire to exhibit knowledge of church rules. I feel sure that my trust is not without foundation."

IN THE week that followed, Sarah went her accustomed way to prayer-meeting, Ladies' Aid and Sewing Circle. She pretended not to hear the comments buzzing all round her, but at night, after she'd got to bed, she'd pull them out of her memory and laugh over them, sometimes aloud—to the wonder of David.

"It's John Slocum, I'll bet my last cent! It's a crime the way he keeps his own mother shut up like a crazy person when she's just as sane as you or I."

"I wonder if it isn't Mrs. Dantee. She's been in the choir a good many years, but she's got a heathenish temper—she ought to have been put out long ago."

"Queer he didn't mention who it was, but if he wants any witnesses against Ray Pertels, you better believe I'll be right on the job. He ought to be run in the way he goes on with his horses, to say nothing of his wife. There ain't much doubt in my mind but that's who he means. And I sure can tell a few things—me living only two doors away for eight years."

"Going to the trial Saturday night? Am I? Well, I should say I am! Think I'll miss a chance of getting even with Mis' Hines after the dirty way she's talked about me all these years? The minute Brother Bruce begun speaking, I knew right away it must be Mis' Hines. I should think she'd feel disgraced for life—to be called before the church like that! But she's got gall enough to face the bishop, that woman has! Why, just last week—" And so on and on.

On Saturday night David's twinkle still endured, but his face was tired. He and Sarah knelt a few minutes in the little sanctuary that was David's study before they went out and down the leaf-strewn path of the little hill toward the dingy, paintless, cheerless church.

"I'm frightened a little," David confessed to Sarah. "Not to face the people—but because of what maybe you'll think. I'm afraid you won't think it just right—in a church—that you'll feel I've made a mistake. Well, the die is cast anyway—but, Sarah, I wonder if you wouldn't do something for me?"

"What, David?"

"Give me a signal of some sort after the meeting—I know I'm being childish, but you've always humored me so, Sarah—just your handkerchief over the edge of the seat or something like that—to tell me whether you think I've done well. If I didn't do right—why, don't do it, of course. I'm going to be terribly unpopular after tonight unless some miracle happens, and I sort of feel I've got to have some one to lean on a little. Will you, Sarah?"

"Of course, David!" She pressed his arm a little.

They had always been used to these little conversations by signal and smile—it was not at all new.

"You won't do it just to make me feel good?"

"No," promised Sarah. "I've never been afraid to tell you if I thought you were making a mistake—have I, David?"

"No, dear. But it's hurting me to be failing you so—this making you pack up and move just when you're so tired from the rush of these last years. I—I——"

"Why, David!"

They were at the church now. They both noted the full church-sheds and the line of buggies and automobiles in front of the edifice. They both smiled a little sadly at their significance. Then David threw back his shoulders squarely and they went in—in David's hand a little black notebook, in his face determination and courageous humor.

If there were a hundred and thirty-two church members, each one must have had company and brought it along. The church was full. Sarah sat down near the back, and David walked up the aisle and turned to face his people under the dim and smoky chandelier. As he stood there, the buzzing and the excited, conjecturing chatter died away, and it became very still.

David's tired face was very grave as he began to speak.

"Let us bow our heads and ask, each one of us, that we may be charitable in our judgment, kind and truthful in our criticism, with brotherly love and loyalty to our church pervading our hearts."

There was a moment's hush as they bowed their heads in silent prayer.

"My heart is full to-night," David said then. "Full of sorrow and disappointment that this meeting should be necessary. A trial before the church is a serious matter and should never occur unless months of personal pleading have failed. I believe it is customary first to call the church-roll."

He proceeded to do so, his lips twitching to an almost uncontrollable upward curve as "Present!" after "Present!" came back to him.

Then he looked round at them all.

"There has doubtless," he began, "been some speculation as to the identity of the person to be brought to trial to-night. I did not tell you for various reasons, chief of which being that I desired your presence here. The charges brought are many, and I ask you to consider them thoughtfully, prayerfully and wisely. The trial will begin of"—he looked round on the many faces curiously and a bit hesitantly, then threw back his head and went on firmly—"of yourself." There was a moment's uncomprehending silence. "No—not of your next-door neighbor," said David clearly, "of—*yourself!*"

Sarah, startled, noted from her back seat the uncomfortable fidgetings all over the house and the anxious glances toward the door.

"There is no need to be apprehensive," David continued. Sarah's heart contracted at the way the weariness of David stood out, even there in the dim light. She felt a fierce anger at these people who had hurt him so. "No one," David's clear voice went on, "no one will fare any worse than the person next to him. You are doubtless astonished—perhaps bewildered. But you cannot be more bewildered than I have been during the last few months, seeking and never finding the way to your hearts. I believe I may truly say that I have done my best and the results have been—negligible. It came to me suddenly, a week or so ago, that there were so many old festering sores in this neighborhood that, unless they could be removed, there would never be any sympathy here. It also came to me that the way to get rid of sores is to first look at them squarely in all their ugliness and, if possible, trace them to their sources. Sometimes they come from such minor, unimportant beginnings—out of all proportion to the size and fierceness of the wound."

He paused as though to let that much soak in. Some faces were angry, some embarrassed and some only anticipatory. David held up the little black book.

"For one week," he said slowly, "I have been storing up charges in preparation for to-night in this little book. There is enough here to ruin the happiness of a great city—to say nothing of Arden Center. I called during the week on practically every family represented here to-night and, without a single exception, I received from every family a charge against some other family that, unless answered satisfactorily, would be enough to disbar them from the church. I am now going to begin at the beginning of the church-roll and present the charges to each in turn. You may defend yourselves if you desire. I wish you would think of us as a big family of brothers and sisters about to have a good scrap to clear the family atmosphere and yet knowing that, when it's all over, we'll all feel better and will bear no ill toward any one. I think if we can get some of this poison out of our systems, we'll be able to have a church again that will be able to do something besides sleep."

HE CONSULTED his book. Several stirred uneasily, and a boy snickered in the back of the church. Suddenly David smiled at them all.

"I wish 'B' came nearer the end," he said. A faint murmur of laughter passed through the house, and Sarah thrilled with pride at the way David was holding them. "I think I'll leave it till the last, anyway—there's so much against it! Brother Bardeen," he said, "will you please stand?"

Bardeen hesitated. Sarah trembled as she suddenly realized David's incredible audacity. She feared Bardeen was going to balk, and wouldn't have blamed him much if he had, but presently he rose, a giant of a figure, and looked round defiantly.

"Brother Bardeen, you are accused of putting the Jones family out of your tenant-house when they had absolutely no other place to go. Have you any defense?"

Bardeen's grunt of relief could be heard all over the church.

"Yes," he said loudly and angrily. "Yes; I did put 'em out. They stole two of my pigs and half my tools, and even washing right off my wife's line. I've offered Jones work a dozen times, but he won't take it, and his wife doesn't care whether he does or not. I couldn't see myself supporting 'em forever, so—yes; I *did* put 'em out!" He glared round at the audience.

"Any one continue the charges?" asked David.

No one did.

"You are excused, Brother Bardeen. I believe it is generally understood that your statements are true. But, you see, some one misunderstood. Now that every one knows the truth, there will, I trust, be no more remarks of like nature. There is no reason why you should not now appear regularly at church, Brother Bardeen." Bardeen turned crimson. He had not been to church in six months. He sat down quickly.

"Sister Burchitt!"

Lydia Burchitt rose—slight, thirty-five, bitter of face.

"If any one has anything against me, let them up and say it now," she said a little acidly. "I ain't afraid to say things to folks' faces."

"That's just it," put in David gently. "That's the very charge against you, Sister Burchitt. I have it, on good authority, that you used to be the prettiest girl within a radius of ten miles and, as I understand it, it made you crabbed because another girl took the man you'd jilted. And now you're so snappy that no one wants to go to see you because they say you tell them more unpleasant things about themselves in half an hour than they could possibly overcome in a lifetime. If he'd jilted you, I could understand in a measure—but he didn't. And you could have had your choice of any one else that knew you—and could yet, if you wouldn't let your sharp tongue spoil your good looks. Have you any defense?"

There were gasps plainly audible. Sister Burchitt's face went from red to an angry white, then back to red again.

"I—I didn't know I was so snappy," she faltered, "but I've been alone so long—I suppose I get worse. And I didn't get crabbed because Lou Holzer married Jennie—but just that time my brother run off out West with the money pa had been saving all his life—and I felt sort of disgraced. And so I kept out of things and got sort of down on the men folks because of it. No—I ain't got any defense."

"I think that that's defense enough," said David, and his face lighted almost into beauty as Marilee Loomis put an arm round Lydia Burchitt.

"Brother Byrnes, I have in my little book against you, a trustee of the church, drawing hay on the Sabbath." He glanced inquiringly at the wiry little trustee, Byrnes.

"Yes, I did," said Byrnes shamefacedly. "I suppose it wasn't right, but I got in debt for some machinery a couple years back. I thought I'd get it paid right up, but everything's went wrong ever since I got it. My wife got sick this summer an' had to go up to Brad City in the hospital for an operation. An' while she was there, she got to worrying about that there debt. An' I told her to get it right off her mind—that things was going fine an' I was going to get it all paid off this summer. Well, one Saturday we cut that big piece up above the knoll there, an' Sam Briggs, that was helping me, hurt his arm in the afternoon an' couldn't stay out the day. I couldn't finish that night alone, and the next morning it looked like rain. I was getting a good price for that hay, an' I got to thinking how it would put me back if it got spoiled. An' I thought of Mary up in that swelterin' hot city, sufferin' and worryin'—an' I went an' got the hay in. I certainly did it all right, an' I was ashamed to do it, an' yet I was awful anxious not to have Mary disappointed again, her feeling so bad and all."

HE SAT down. David looked about questioningly.

"Any one anything to say?" he asked.

Bull Danford, who clerked in Slocum's store, got to his feet.

"Yes, I have," he said. "I'm not a member of the church, but I presume my name would come next if I were. But I'm one, at least, that made remarks about Mr. Byrnes drawing hay on Sunday. I want to apologize. I feel especially apologetic, because I loaded some queer-smelling butter off onto him a while ago, thinking he lived too far out to bother to complain or return it."

The tension relaxed a little with the laughter that followed.

"Sister Dantee," called David.

Sister Dantee, fair and bulky, stood up with a rustle.

"Temper," said David briefly. "Uncontrollable—driven your husband away and most of your friends."

"I was so red-hot mad," said Mrs. Dantee, "when you begun this here to-night, I wanted to get out, but I couldn't without making too much of a fuss. But when Lydia Burchitt, that I thought didn't have a kind word in her any more, got up and said what she did, I begun to calm down a little. I guess it'll do me good once to say I'm ashamed of my nasty temper, and I feel so sort of subdued right now that I don't know but what I could hold on to my tongue, for a spell, anyway, if Tom wanted to come back."

There was a good-natured shout of mirth. Tom's pilgrimages from home, owing to Mrs. Dantee's caustic tongue, were the source of many an afternoon's discussion in Arden Center.

"I think," said David, "that I may venture to welcome you—and Mr. Dantee—back into the fellowship of the church."

"Brother Fancher!" Fancher ran the mill. He was a jolly, red-faced bachelor. "I understand you haven't spoken to Lydia Burchitt in ten years—on account of her not paying for a bag of chicken-feed at your mill."

Fancher snorted angrily.

"I'd like to know who said that about Lyddy!" he exclaimed. "Lyddy Burchitt's as honest as you are. I haven't spoken to her because she told me not to. I asked her to marry me just the wrong minute—I didn't know she was all cut up about her brother—and she told me never to speak to her again. I was just stubborn enough to mind her. But"—he turned and looked straight across the aisle into Lyddy's eyes as though they were all alone there in the church—"but I'm going to bust that decree from right now on, Lyddy."

Strangely enough, no one laughed this time. Lydia Burchitt tried to wipe her eyes, unobserved.

And so it went on, from Helkner, who kept his boys out of school because he'd had such a poor year that he couldn't afford shoes for them, to old Mrs. Yokum, who hadn't had any of her children home for twenty years. And the merriment that had crept in at first died away bit by bit till it was very quiet in the church. Folks' souls came out and were looked at, and now and then a tragedy that might have been avoided through the years came to light. There were tears, plenty of them, and some ashamed confessions and many explanations of trifles gossiped into bigness. Sarah felt stirred as she had never been during all the years of David's ministry.

THEY came at last to the end. Sarah could almost feel the wave of friendliness and warmth that went from heart to heart and made the people suddenly one.

"The greatest charge of all is against me," David's voice came to her very soberly through the hush, "in that I have failed to live enough like the Man of Galilee to influence you all these years. I can only ask you to forgive me." It seemed as though he wanted to say more had it not been for the fulness of his heart. He raised his hand as though to dismiss them, but Sam Slocum was suddenly on his feet.

"Folks," he said, "you know the petition we got up a few weeks ago? You all joined in, but I began it. Well, I think it was a mistake. I feel cleaner inside than I have for a good long stretch of years, and I reckon you all do. Seems to me we need to ask Brother Bruce's pardon and send another petition telling the superintendent we can't get along without our minister. Every one agreeing stand up."

He spoke quietly and all stood up quietly. Sarah's eyes were suddenly wet, but they cleared to meet the joy in David's eyes as his look winged straight to hers, then dropped to the bit of white hanging over the edge of the seat. He bowed his head. His voice was not quite steady.

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace!"

If You Enjoy Adventure, You'll Find It Here

The Witch *of* Gondar

A Novel of Strange, Wild Peoples. Not Blood-curdling, Shocking, but the Kind of Story That Makes the Blood Flow a Little Faster and Leaves You with a Healthy Glow

By William Ashley Anderson

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

ONE night, in September, 1916, the Little Union Club, rising above the calm waters of the Gulf of Aden, slate-blue under the dim glow of a full moon soaring over the Indian Ocean and the ragged mountains of the Hadramaut, presented a scene of unusual activity.

Sudden darkness had shut out the scorching ugliness of the barren rocks thrust above the limpid sea to a height of two thousand feet. A sort of panting stillness hung over the bazaars. The shops that faced the Crescent at Steamer Point glowed dimly; the gray hulks of vessels at anchor in the harbor twinkled through their ports; a few dhows drifted like ghosts across the faintly whispering waters; dilapidated gharries, seeking passengers, creaked and rattled wearily about the landing-stage, while occasionally a motor-car passed along the main highway with an uproar that roused strange echoes in the ancient Arabian port.

The place suggested a gathering of hot, exhausted and surfeited people who had flung themselves down in the gloom to catch a struggling breath and watch for a moment the serene moon as it rose out of the desert. Magnified to an enormous size, it seemed like a vast, imminent globe of mother-of-pearl, scattering upon the barren mountains a silver glow that shimmered through the atmosphere.

At this hour, Aden, hot, ugly and poisonous, whose bazaars breed intrigue, corruption and violence, was transformed. It was beautiful. A man of imagination looking upon it then for the first time would have been elevated to immeasurable heights. The view across the great curved bay in the direction of the glimmering salt heaps of Khor Marksar was an exquisite nocturne. The moon could not be disregarded. With that great lamp in the sky, no intelligent man could fail to understand something of his own puniness, even though, strangely enough, his soul was magnified within him.

Only in the club, apparently, was it disregarded.

A piano and two violins were making unfitting music there. Bursts of laughter came from the bar, where glasses tinkled; the sharp, crisp click of ivory balls sounded from the billiard-room, while out on the broad cement terrace, whose foundation rested in the water, there were tables crowded with intent, querulous bridge-players, about whom hovered the uncertain figures of restless couples not quite settled for the evening.

The *Maloja* had left some notables ashore that afternoon, and a dance was already in progress, ostensibly in their honor. The occasion was a double benefit, however, for it afforded an opportunity for the wives and daughters of officials to see new faces, hear fresh news, and dance with men from home not yet grown anemic and *blasé*, or insanely impassioned by the corrupting heat of the arid tropics.

They chatted brightly, and their clear, shrill laughter was pleasant to hear. The sight of their faces as they drifted through an old-fashioned waltz, flushed, eyes bright, teeth gleaming between parted lips, was in a way an inspiration to the other exiles who looked at them, concealing behind masks of cynicism the better emotions that stirred within their hearts. As a matter of fact, to any one who cared to give it a thought, their presence, being a symbol of home, gave point to the argument that had been going on in the desert all day long.

By this argument, the Turks were attempting to prove that Aden was a besieged citadel, and had succeeded to such an extent that, the night before, the flashes of their guns could be seen from the veranda of the club.

The peninsula of Aden was effectively cut off from access to the mainland.

To the casual residents, to the soldiers who defended the place, to the ships that came and went with uninterrupted regularity, this meant nothing. A friendly arrangement had even been made by the political authorities for the Bedawi to bring fuel, and sometimes dates, honey and fodder, on camels through the Turkish lines. For the rest, no one cared to visit the mainland, anyway.

There was a deeper significance, however, that attached to the situation and impressed itself very strongly upon a special few.

To the Somalis, the Turks, the Bedawi themselves and the natives generally scattered along the shores of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, it plainly appeared that the Defenders of the Faith had bearded the Lion. The British were actually penned up within their citadel. The Turkish guns literally hammered at the gates of Aden.

There had been moments of considerable mental perturbation for the political resident, Colonel A. B. Whittington, K. C. I. E., who felt more than any one else the serious loss of prestige the British empire was suffering—and its far-reaching effects, which, like a fist of clouds on the horizon, suggested danger only to the experienced mariner.

A casual glance over the crowd, as it weaved in and out, gave no hint of seriousness in the situation. Naval officers in white and gold, civilians in the white-and-black evening dress of the tropics, soldiers in khaki, neat and clean, though worn with service, all drinking Perseus cocktails and Johnny Collinses, bantering, arguing querulously, calling persistently for the Arab servants who shuffled about with wet trays—their whole tone was that of idle, boresome entertainment.

AMONG the women, the most attractive was certainly Miss Barbara Whittington, daughter of the political resident.

The resident himself was a large man whose complexion would have been florid in more temperate climates. His hair was iron-gray, his mustache crisp and well groomed. He moved slowly and with precision. His gray eyes had a steady stare that suggested a somewhat torpid intellect. Altogether, he gave an impression of handsome inertia. His lazy smile, though winning, was exasperating to men who loved inconsequential activity. It seemed to imply a vast good nature, a genial comprehension and, nevertheless, an unshakable determination to hold his ground. He was regarded by those in high authority as one who was more familiar with native affairs in Arabia and northeast Africa, looked upon with the large vision of empire, than any other European. This was a fact of which most of his compatriots, of course, were irritatedly unaware.

As he made his way slowly across the veranda, with his daughter following at his elbow, bowing to acquaintances with a slow smile, occasionally pausing to bend forward for a low-voiced word with more intimate friends at the tables, he was subjected to a curious scrutiny by the crowd lined along the open bar. These men, mostly young army and navy officers, looked upon him with the half-veiled insolence of young fighters who take no thought of the loads that press on the shoulders of experienced and conscientious administrators. They judged success or failure as it reacted locally and directly upon themselves; and that day one of them had been killed in the sands in what they considered a wholly unnecessary sortie. His piping voice would be heard no more. They had resented that piping voice alive; they resented its absence, now that it was gone.

Some one murmured over his glass:

"Cheeri-o! The king of the Hadramaut! He smirks—he cracks a joke. My sacred aunt! He's the shining wit of the party!"

"It licks me," declared a morbid youth who was drowning in a series of cocktails the memory of the piping-voiced defunct—whom he had never met in life.

An unhealthily pink, plump, soft civilian of middle age, claiming his place by the side of youth because of his sense of humor, whispered hoarsely,

"I say—have any of you chaps seen the proclamation he's posted in the bazaars—the latest?"

"No-o."

"Oh, it's priceless! A proclamation printed in English, Arabic and Gujerati——"

"Amharic," interposed a large, gloomy officer, with a contemptuous side glance.

"Oh, Amharic, is it? Well, an equally useless language—what? A proclamation urging all those who may be interested to inform their friends within the Turkish lines that munitions must not be stored in mosques. Otherwise we'll be put to the necessity of bombing them from planes. Priceless—what?"

"Say it over again—slowly," requested an irreverent subaltern. "I give you my sacred word, I'm willing to laugh if you'll let me have the cue."

"It licks me," repeated the morbid youth, shaking his head morosely.

"Don't be asses! '*Inform their friends within the Turkish lines!*' He gives the whole show away—admits there is free and open communication between the bazaars and the enemy lines."

This statement, intended to startle, only brought forth derisive laughter.

"Oh, *that!* Why, every one knows that. All you have to do to walk from here to Bagdad is put on a tarboosh and a dirty old nightgown——"

"No one would stop you—except to cadge a cigarette——"

"Hell! I'd be uncomfortable if the place *wasn't* rotten with spies. Wouldn't seem like Aden. Don't trust my own batman——"

"Just take a look at the foreigners in the bazaars — Somalis, Abyssinians, Indians, Jews, Armenians, Greeks——"

"And Americans," interjected a young, sallow-faced shipping-agent, glancing sideways at a man who stood alone and seemed by his attitude to be a stranger to the group. All eyes for an instant were directed at him; but if he felt this scrutiny, he affected at first to ignore it.

In the conventional black trousers and white jacket that make the mess dress of a civilian, there was nothing distinctive about his costume. He presented, however, an interesting masculine impression. Slightly above the average height, he stood with his back against the bar, studying the little groups that were scattered about the veranda with an amused expression verging on the sardonic. He had the neat head of an intelligent fighter, rough black hair, and blue, thoughtful eyes that flashed in the rare moments when excitement stirred him.

BUT the first thought of a Britisher looking at him was: "Why the devil isn't he in uniform?"

He had, in fact, appeared in Aden a month before to take advantage of war-time conditions to revive the business of a defunct American trading company. As an American merchant, established in the Crater, he seemed to have little time for social amenities, and had apparently abstained from all activities outside the line of business. He had, nevertheless, with annoying boldness made an opportunity to be presented to Miss Whittington, and through her had established, two evenings before, a casual acquaintance with her father, the political resident.

Actuated somewhat by a desire to justify his own existence in mufti, the sallow young shipping-agent could not overlook the chance of disparaging this unconvivial American. He possessed also a latent envy that had grown out of the American's easily established friendship with Miss Whittington, and this prompted him to make the remark that turned all faces in the direction of the stranger.

The momentary silence at length attracted the American's attention. He withdrew his gaze from Miss Whittington and looked sideways at the group along the bar.

Awkwardness was avoided by the shipping-agent lifting his glass and exclaiming mockingly,

"We drinks to yeh, Yank!"

The American lifted his glass and said, "Santy!"

Encouraged by this mark of amiability, the shipping-agent added, with the suggestion of a sneer,

"And sometime, maybe, we'll drink to your country."

"Thanks!"

"When it does something to deserve it."

The American smiled uneasily by way of answer, and his glance became slightly troubled. The army and navy officers were silent. Their code was rigid, and their eyes expressed their disapproval of the remark. The plump civilian became pink with emotion. Bold in his cups and excited by his coarse sense of humor, the shipping-agent added:

"Let me have the next note that comes along, Yank, and if I like it, I'll drink to it then. We'd get bored stiff without the funny sheets, you know, old boy."

The American looked at the speaker with angry astonishment. One of the naval officers said under his breath:

"Easy there, you silly chump! Don't start a muss in the club here. There are guests, you ruddy fool!"

"A muss?" said the shipping-agent, with bibulous bravado. "Rot! I've heard Americans don't fight."

Several of the card-players looked up with irritation and uneasiness. Miss Whittington, who was standing behind her father's chair, could not conceal an expression of surprise and contempt.

The American instinctively started. The next instant, as his eyes rested on the group at the resident's table, he gave a grunt of amusement, thrust his hands into his pockets and, turning his back on the people at the bar, walked deliberately toward Miss Whittington, smiling calmly, and murmuring as he approached her, "Good-evening," as though nothing of consequence had been been said.

The large, gloomy officer, looking after him with an expression of disgust and disappointment, muttered to himself:

"Well, I'm blowed! I'm damn well blowed!"

The shipping-agent burst into laughter, and the group turned to the bar again and resumed its drinks. The officers, however, felt an unhappy sense of depression. They had seen something they could not understand, and they resented the shipping-agent's flippancy.

As the American approached, Miss Whittington looked up with an enigmatical expression denoting both welcome and resentment. She responded to his greeting with a forced air of indifference, and, after one perplexed glance, continued to look down at her father's hand. Colonel Whittington glanced up and treated the newcomer to an indifferent nod; the others spoke a few words and continued their game without paying further attention. Undeterred by this cool reception, the American retained his place by Miss Whittington's side, deliberately lighted a cigarette, and, with half-closed eyes, gazed through wisps of smoke at the card-players. His gaze rested longest on the resident, as though trying to pierce a mask behind which was a countenance unfamiliar to any one else in the club.

THE close scrutiny of a physiognomist would indeed have discovered a marked disquietude in Colonel Whittington's expression. It seemed as though he were deliberately trying to conceal an increasing anxiety, and his mind, while automatically comprehending the cards, was secretly engaged upon very serious considerations. This distraction was well dissembled, however, and it seemed to his companions that he was simply "off" his play.

Miss Whittington, looking furtively at the American, was struck by this scrutiny of her father. All at once she experienced a startled feeling that his interest was not at all in her but entirely absorbed in him. She suddenly discovered in the man's face hard lines, significant of an unusual character. She knew at once there must have been a reason for him to accept publicly an imputation of cowardice.

"I certainly hope you find me acceptable," the American remarked unexpectedly.

Miss Whittington, biting her lip, discovered that he had caught her reflection in the polished surface of a cigarette-case which her father held in his hand.

"I was wondering," she ventured deliberately, "why you ignored what that man said."

"Oh, you heard?"

"We couldn't help hearing."

"You think I should have magnificently punched his head?"

Like two drunken figures, Sevier and Cohusac stumbled through the dark alleyways. Goats littered the way before them.

"It was just a thought—that's all. It struck me as curious. Our view-points are so different."

"I expect so. But it would have been a rather stupid waste of time, you see." He looked up at the moon glowing radiantly above them. "Have you ever seen such beauty?" he remarked.

Miss Whittington almost stamped her foot.

"Beauty!" she exclaimed impatiently. "Is that all that occurs to you?"

"Why not?" he replied, looking directly at her. "Many women would find it a flattering implication. Beauty means almost everything that's worth while, anyway."

"Is there no such thing as honor, then?"

"On the other hand, whoever said dishonor was beautiful? Do you know you're deliberately spoiling a charming picture? You shouldn't be vindictive or argumentative in this moonlight, Miss Whittington. There's a place for everything. To-night, I should say, is a night for romance."

"You certainly are an extraordinary man!"

Miss Whittington looked out across the bay uneasily.

The American instantly darted a glance at the players. The cards were being shuffled. An Arab servant was taking orders for drinks. Colonel Whittington was lighting a fresh cigarette, while his gaze traveled restlessly about the veranda as though he hoped to discover something in the assemblage to restore his lost equanimity.

The American looked back again at the daughter, taking in at one glance her slim, firm figure, poised yet tense, her blue eyes gazing away with a brooding expression, the soft mass of her hair touched with moonlight. She seemed to embody grace, reposeful beauty, yet an ardent and determined nature.

Suddenly raising his voice to a full conversational tone, designed to catch the ear of the resident, he said, with the inane flippancy that older men despise:

"Miss Whittington, let's go over to the railing and look at the little fishes. I've something very important I want to whisper to you."

Colonel Whittington glanced up sharply, with a perceptible frown.

Miss Whittington, perplexed, turned her head slowly. The American, touching her elbow, added earnestly in a low tone,

"Please come."

They walked slowly to the balustrade, presenting a picture of perfect friendship and understanding. They made an attractive couple. The shipping-agent murmured,

"That's just the way with these blinking women—taking up with a damned skrimshanker like that!"

The gloomy officer, frowning swiftly, was about to make a remark when his attention was attracted by Colonel Whittington. Instinctively he stiffened, with a gesture of understanding, and, throwing away his cigarette, approached the resident.

"Culverson, would you mind taking my hand?" said Colonel Whittington, with a smile. "I think this moonlight must affect me. My head's buzzing like the bazaar."

"Certainly, sir."

WHITTINGTON, with an air of indecision as though he had not a single thought on his mind, strolled casually in the direction of his daughter and the American, who were leaning over the balustrade watching the phosphorescent bursts in the heaving blue surface and occasionally lifting their eyes to drink in, as it were, such an amazing radiance of moonlight as is seen only over deserts of sand or barren, uninhabitable mountains.

"If we were in England," said Miss Whittington in a matter-of-fact tone, "I should say that faint ring about the moon meant snow."

"Snow?"

"Or frost, at least."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the American in amazement. "Doesn't the sheer beauty of it—the glory—the romance touch you at all?"

"Oh, the romance! In Aden? On this barren rock? I think that's a little absurd."

The remark instantly struck the American as a forced exaggeration. He saw that her face was really troubled; her bosom rose and fell in long, tremulous breaths; her hands were clutching the balustrade very tightly, as though with a conscious effort at repression. Struck by a whimsical thought, he said softly:

"You are very wrong. In Aden and along these barren desert shores you find the very essence of romance. It blossoms like a flower on these monstrous hills; it falls in a mantle about us in the radiance of that unbelievable moon; every cry or tinkle that rises above the bazaar is a tale of amorous adventure or extravagant intrigue. It seems to me that all the sordid facts of life are transformed by the blazing sun of these latitudes and the maddening moon that you are looking at so calmly now. They rise—they soar beyond all limits of credulity—and become epics of love and war and passion— You doubt it? Well, I could tell you tales!"

Hardly understanding him, Miss Whittington, nevertheless, felt herself gradually yielding to his mood. She heard his low-pitched voice speaking evenly almost in rhythm with the velvet plash of the long swells that sighed against the stone foundations of the terrace. In an instant, the cold barriers of her reserve melted in a warm flood of emotion. She hardly dared breathe for fear of breaking the spell that was woven about her. She felt her companion touch her hand, but so gently, in such perfect harmony with her thoughts, that she experienced no sense of shock.

All at once her father's voice behind her remarked with conversational casualness, tinged with irony:

"Aren't you afraid of that moon? It strikes people with blindness, you know, and is supposed to cause paralysis."

The American, withdrawing his hand, unperceived, replied with perfect composure:

"We find it rather inspiring. I can easily understand why that and the sun can give great strength to the Moslem creed. Just looking at it makes you feel the presence of divinity."

"Perhaps," said the resident dryly; "but the Moslem faith is a little more utilitarian than that."

"Right!" said the American, smiling. "They worship in the sunlight when possible, and don't hesitate to use their mosques for storehouses when convenient. Isn't that so?"

Colonel Whittington, who was about to light a cigar, stood perfectly still, with the match burning slowly in his fingers.

"What's that?" he asked in a severe tone.

"Well, they're storing munitions in the mosques——"

"What?"

"I read your proclamation yesterday, Colonel. I had hoped to see you last night, but I had an unbreakable engagement with a—a Jew; so this has been the first opportunity——"

Without changing his attitude, Whittington's solid frame seemed subtly to convey the impression of sudden extreme alertness. He threw away his cigar with an involuntary gesture.

"I beg your pardon," he said hesitatingly; "but the othe night, when I met you, I didn't quite catch your name, unfortunately—it was such a casual meeting——"

"Richard Sevier."

"Father," said Miss Whittington, placing her hand upon her father's arm and looking uncertainly at her companion.

A REMARKABLE change had come over the resident. The lazy slowness that seemed to characterize his movements had given place to a vibrant intensity. He looked fixedly at the American, as though trying to sum up the stranger's character and reach a decision of great importance. The strangeness of his attitude gave Miss Whittington the impression that her father was displeased. To relieve the situation, she exclaimed:

"Look how those plumes of sails are silhouetted against the moon! Have you ever seen anything so beautiful?"

Her father said:

"Barbara, will you please make an opportunity to get Captain Culverson over here?"

The American immediately rose to his feet

"No, no; you remain. Ask him casually, Barbara, so as not to draw attention, you understand. Don't make it obvious that I want him. Stand by and wait until he is dummy. He'll probably lay down his hand quickly enough."

A pang of fright pierced Miss Whittington. She looked at the American with wide, startled eyes; but obeying her father's instructions, she turned reluctantly and walked slowly toward the table her father had just left. The moment she turned her back, the resident drew up a chair. Sevier said:

"I've been in Aden a month—on this Abyssinian business particularly. I didn't let you know of my presence before, because it wasn't strictly necessary, you know, and

I couldn't very well approach you without it being noticed and checked up against me. As it is, I'm now pretty well established as a trader. Besides, I've linked up with the Jew, got in touch with several agents through business connections, and consider myself *au courant* with all that interests us in northeast Africa. When I read your proclamation yesterday, and understood you were calling for assistance, I came at the first opportunity that wouldn't rouse suspicion."

"You relieve me immensely. The situation's bad."

"I know it. Here is my authorization, if you wish to see it. You will see that I come from Earl Grey himself, and have full powers to do what I can in the Abyssinian business. So far as that goes, I am sort of plenipotentiary without protection That is to say, they leave it to me to do whatever I can, without diplomatic or military resources—you understand?"

Nodding, the resident spread the paper on his knee, where it was decipherable in the clear radiance of moonlight. He drew a sigh of relief.

"I hope it's not too late," he said. "Why didn't you come and stay with me when you arrived?"

"It's not my way, Colonel. After all, there are only three important ways of acquiring information of big movements. One, through official channels and the exercise of authority. That's your way. Another, mixing about in disguise, which is only useful locally. That's spy work. And the third, as a free lance with unlimited resources. That's my way. Of the three, I believe mine is the best."

THE resident, having somewhat recovered his poise, puffed slowly at a fresh cigar, with an expression of dubiousness on his countenance.

"Well," said Sevier, after studying him for an instant, "I'll illustrate what I mean. I've been in Aden a month as an American trader, doing a legitimate business and making a rather good thing of it. As a trader, I've met merchants of all sorts. I've dealt directly with Banian cloth merchants, Arabs from both the Yemen and Abyssinia handling the long-berry coffee of Harrar and the short-berry of Mocha, Somalis selling hides which have been accumulating in their godowns in Berveras and other places along the Benadir coast, Persians who've come by dhow from Muscat and are visiting at the house of Abu Khalil. I've a large deal pending with a Jew over American cotton, and I've just been looking over a consignment of rather inferior ivory owned by some very superior Abyssinians. Altogether, my collection of acquaintances has been pretty complete. After a little sorting, I find myself with a good many interesting facts——"

"What, for instance?"

Sevier's countenance lighted with a smile.

"Well, sir, three days ago the military made an attack out by Sheikh. There was a bit of a scrimmage, and we succeeded in repulsing a large force of Turks and hostile Arabs and gaining our objectives. Now, can you tell me, honestly, how large the Turkish force was employed in that particular engagement?"

"All I need do is send a chit to C[illegible]lverson for the information."

"Quite. The Intelligence will render full report. As a matter of fact, there were only about sixty Turks squatting behind some mud walls, wondering when the order to withdraw would be given. The place had been abandoned in the morning."

The resident laughed shortly.

"I'll have to admit it."

"Yes. I got it from the Bedawi who bring in wood every day, and from no less than two merchants who have lately been getting fresh vegetables from Sheikh."

"Don't you think we ought to have the names of those traders?"

"You're welcome to them, of course; though I can definitely assure you they are not spies. They're simple gossips. You've forbidden, under severe penalties, any rumors in the bazaar. Well, you might just as well forbid women to talk. The people in the bazaar must gossip or burst—and they find me a discreet and friendly listener. I hear surprising things. Even though they sell me nothing, they enjoy my company. I've started a few rumors myself that made their mouths water for a couple of days.

"You see, I can meet them on common ground. I have something to sell. They want it. We bargain. We haggle, almost. We discuss the dangers to shipping, the causes of fluctuations in exchange, the advisability of buying heavily. They raise objections. The Abyssinian market may soon be closed—a Mad Mullah is upsetting things in Somaliland—and so on. They know all about the Abyssinian affair. They know about the Germans in East Africa. They have their own opinion about the king of the Hedjaz——"

"What is it?" demanded the resident, with sharp interest.

"I hope it's not true——"

"God knows it can't be worse than my own!"

SEVIER paused and drew a long breath as his thoughts turned anxiously to the king of the Hedjaz, who, as governor of Mecca and all the holy land of the Mussulman faith, wielded an enormous power over all the Mussulman people of the world. He was an Arab, and as such the British found it possible to wean him from active allegiance to the Turk, and hoped in the end, to gain his open support against the powers at Stamboul, thus checkmating all efforts to unite the Mussulmans of the world in a holy war against the Allied Nations.

"What is your opinion, Colonel Whittington?"

"Captain Clarence reports definitely that the king of the Hedjaz will do nothing until he finds which way the cat jumps."

"Well," said the American sourly, "the cat has jumped."

Colonel Whittington almost rose out of his chair. Under his breath, he said:

"Good God! What do you mean?"

"I've just heard," explained Sevier, with deliberation, "that we can no longer count on Abyssinia to maintain the balance in northern Africa. It may abandon at any moment now its ancient Christian isolation and become a Mussulman hegemony, uniting all the Mussulman countries of the world in a holy war——"

"After almost fifteen hundred years of militant, fanatic Christianity? It's impossible!"

"So I thought, too. But there is no longer any doubt that Lidj Yassou, the reigning prince, is on his way to Harrar, on the border of Somaliland, and that he intends to become a Mussulman."

"If that is so," said the resident, slumping in his chair, "the situation is almost—ah—desperate.

"We hold Egypt with the Australians; but Allenby has not yet been able to reach even Gaza on the edge of Palestine. We are checked here at Aden. Mesopotamia is a horrible muddle—ten thousand a week, I hear, coming down to Bombay in cots. And British East Africa is another mess—the country deadly, and the German territory well defended by von Lettow. And there is Gallipoli!"

The resident slightly raised his hand with a gesture of helplessness.

"You understand, then," said Sevier, after a moment's silence, "the full significance of our position. From the Mediterranean to the Union of South Africa, we hold only one territory with security—Egypt. And even there, though we stopped the first invasion, a second may be made. The Turks, then, are on the eastern edge of Egypt. The Senussi have almost driven the Italians out of Tripoli. Darfur, on the edge of the Sudan, is in revolt. Somalis have raided along the Juba River. And German East Africa threatens Rhodesia on the south and British East on the north——"

"You mean it all emphasizes the fact that Abyssinia is the key to the situation in Africa?"

"Exactly. So long as it retains its ancient Christianity, we can control Africa. If it becomes Mussulman, it will open wide the gate for invasion from Asia; and it can put an army of several hundred thousand warriors down the Nile and an additional force in East Africa. Then—God help us! This isn't merely possible, either. It is probable."

The resident, chin sunk on his chest, looked out across the glory of moonlit water as though dazed. Finally, he said:

"We must fight, then. If we act quickly from Egypt— We defeated the king of Amhara, you know, in 'Sixty-eight——"

"That's too English! A nation that brushed aside every attempt at a Mussulman invasion—that, in our own modern times, whipped the Mahdi, whom we took fifteen years to subdue—and wiped out the Italian army of fourteen thousand at Adua—that nation is not to be overrun in a few months, especially when the bulk of our army is holding on with its teeth in France. We cannot afford to underestimate. We've got to believe that they still have dangerous potentialities."

"But, Sevier, this thing is entirely beyond my jurisdiction, anyway. We can have no direct influence from here, because we have no power to control."

"You can, at least, Colonel Whittington, present the matter with the greatest urgency to the War Office. Make clear the necessity of concluding the Sudan trouble at any cost and urge them to put the screws on the Somalis with troops from British East. If we can stop all disturbances in those places, we'll have a better chance to work diplomatically among the Abyssinians. We will at least have a fighting chance to keep their activities within the limits of Abyssinia."

"I most emphatically agree with you. I'll do my best."

"Well then, so far as Abyssinia is concerned, I intend to go up there immediately myself. I want to get at the center of the trouble before it breaks."

"But you said that Lidj Yassou is already an apostate."

"That is true; but I must find out something about the influence behind him."

"Isn't it sufficient that the Turks, Austrians and Germans maintain legations in Addis Abeba?"

"Not at all, sir. The Allied representatives and our agents throughout Abyssinia and Somaliland and the Sudan are excellent men. Our minister in Addis Abeba can be depended upon to hold the situation. Beveridge may seem slow, but he's effective."

"Yes; I agree with you."

"I must cross over to Djibouti to-night without attracting attention. There would be the devil to pay in the bazaar if they discovered who I am. I'll go over ostensibly on business, of course."

"Have you seen the Jew?"

"Juda bin Ismael? Yes. He'll keep me in funds. I'm depending on you to let Beveridge and whoever else may be interested know that I am up there and may have occasion to call upon them for assistance at any time."

"He is already on the lookout for you."

"Oh, good!"

"But you are traveling on an American passport."

"I am an American, Colonel. That is a fact. My father was born in Kentucky; but my mother was Scotch, a *pukka* Appan Stewart. I should think you'd heard of my father, Robert Sevier. He was one of the few men of Burton's time to reach Mecca—though he only saw the city from a distance."

"Certainly I knew of him!" exclaimed Colonel Whittington. "I even met him when I was a young man at Malta——"

"As I met you, I suppose, in Simla?"

The two looked at each other for an instant, and suddenly both smiled and stretched out their hands.

"It is a very great pleasure to renew the acquaintance," said the resident.

"It is always delightful for me to meet a friend of my father's. But this is particularly fine, because we're working over the fields he loved. He must have been a great fellow. I wish we had him with us now."

AT THIS moment, Miss Whittington reappeared, accompanied by Captain Culverson. The resident, therefore, said, as though continuing a conversation:

"You must find the Abyssinians very curious people to do business with, Mr. Sevier. For instance, how do you pay for the stuff you purchase from them when currency is used so little?"

"It is mainly adjusted by the balance of trade. We import cotton goods from America and export coffee and hides. Almost every stitch of the garments worn by about five million natives in that part of Africa is woven on an American loom——"

Colonel Whittington interrupted the discourse to address the approaching officer:

"Oh, I say, Culverson! Mr. Sevier, here—do you know Captain Culverson, Mr. Sevier?" The two men bowed non-committally. "Mr. Sevier is going to Djibouti on a matter of some importance. I've just promised to get him over as soon as possible and without fail. Will you see to it?"

"There's no passenger-boat for several days, sir."

"There's a gunboat in harbor. We'll get the Admiralty to sanction the movement. The business concerns—ah—munitions—and mosques."

A light suddenly gleamed in the eyes of the gloomy Culverson. All hesitancy instantly vanished.

"Yes, sir. What time will you go aboard, Mr. Sevier?"

"I can't be sure; but it will be suddenly, and probably round two or three o'clock in the morning. I have a bag here which I'll send aboard immediately."

"Right-o! They'll be expecting you."

Ships' bells began to tap out the hour like the notes of a silver triangle. The water whispered musically at their feet. There was a scraping of chairs as the first trembling notes of "Destiny" breathed out into the moonlight. Lifting her face to be bathed in the incandescent flood, Miss Whittington said softly,

"Oh, it's glorious—isn't it?"

"May I have this waltz?" asked Culverson.

As they moved away silently together, with the resident and Richard Sevier looking after them thoughtfully, the gloomy officer said, with a flash of enthusiasm:

"Sevier! I hadn't caught his name. He's probably one of the most romantic figures in Africa."

Miss Whittington replied with an air of abstraction and a slight tremor in her voice:

"Yes. He is certainly romantic. Almost too much so."

WHEN Sevier emerged from the clubhouse an hour later, he remained standing for a moment under the arch of the entrance wrapped in thought as he waited for a motor-gharry to drive up. He experienced a brief relaxation from the keen, anxious concentration of his interview with the resident. His thoughts were inclined to wander, though he was clearly aware of certain engagements he must fulfill before leaving Aden. In the first place, it was necessary for him to see Juda bin Ismael; and it was equally essential for him to speak to his assistant in order to make his trip to Djibouti seem plausible.

As his gharry swung into the main road, a strange figure in white drill suddenly appeared from the opposite side of the road, limping out of the darkness, supported by two walking-sticks. In the steely glow of moonlight, Sevier recognized Hillot Cohusac, a young French merchant of the Crater, with whom he had formed an unusual friendship. This unexpected meeting brought Sevier to his feet, laughing. He ordered the driver to pull-up, and called out cheerfully:

"Hello, Cohusac! What on earth are you doing in this part of town at midnight?"

Cohusac lifted a mocking finger, rolled his large, languishing eyes, lifted his straight eyebrows with a droll expression of helplessness and turned his face up to the moon.

"I expect I'm mad, old chap—mad like the rest when the moon is full! I could not stay indoors. I could not sleep. My head has been full of dreams, my heart banging like a big drum. Good God, Sevier, I could embrace the world—kiss the lips of a volcano! Yet look at me! I crawl about like a half-crushed beetle—with a soul as deep and tumultuous as that deep, warm sea——"

"You have been thinking of the fair Persian—what?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Cohusac, a wild expression flashing across his countenance. "I will tell you something to astonish you."

With ejaculations, a groan that seemed wrenched from his soul, painful twisting, and grimaces which the amiable Cohusac endeavored to make comical, Sevier at last succeeded in settling his friend beside him, keeping up a pointless banter until he was in place and the car moved on once more. He seized the opportunity to remark, with an air of casualness,

"Oh, by the way, I'm glad to have run into you, because I'm going over to Djibouti for a few days."

"What!" exclaimed Cohusac, wrenching himself up in his seat. "But why? You did not tell me. You are joking. There is no ship—and you're not likely to sail in a dhow, eh?"

"No. One of the officers of the *Vixen* invited me; so I thought I'd take the opportunity and go. Only be for a few days, I expect."

Cohusac sagged slightly in his seat and fell into a strange and moody silence. Sevier was touched somewhat by the expressive, childlike melancholy of his unusual friend, realizing all at once the cruelty there is in forming friendships that are destined to be broken abruptly and forever.

Cohusac had been the only man to inspire any feeling of genuine friendship in Sevier upon his arrival in Aden, He was, indeed, a remarkable and unusual character. Rendered a hopeless cripple by the war, he had been obliged, almost in an instant, to abandon forever the sports, the violent activities, the romantic adventures that had made life for him a series of fascinating tales spun on a thread of wit, humor and daring, and to sit to one side, smiling wryly or with the shadow of a memory flitting across his face, nodding with understanding.

Those days had gone. Nevertheless, this was a fact he stubbornly refused to admit. Most painful—yet at the same time amusing—of his strange conceits were his persistent excursions into the dark bazaars in search of romance. This instinct, which seemed to contradict his intellect, lured him into strange follies.

Stretched out in a long Indian chair, sipping a cool tonic, he would spend hours recounting his amazing and doubtful exploits. Harems to him were as beehives to a bear—with this difference: he never tasted the honey.

"Oh, well," he exclaimed lightly, "after all there is but one thing certain in life—and that is the certainty that nothing is certain. Everything is mutable, transient, evanescent. We can cling only to memory; we can hope for nothing except—hope. You see, I am a philosopher. The devil! Why must friendship depend so much on circumstance? It seems to me, my good Sevier, that at home or abroad we are always bound to be exiled from something."

"And what about the beautiful Persian, *copain?*"

"Oh, Sevier, you phlegmatic chump," Cohusac said, with amused contempt, as his thoughts flew to the woman, "you do not seem to realize that there is an ideal even in romance. It is certain you have no heart at all, or assuredly it would have been torn from your body when Miriam smiled from the barred window of Abu Khalil's house. Persian or Arab or Egyptian, I do not know; but—*wau!*—she is a ravishing dream—a vision! Ah, God! I tell you, I who know the Semite from Somaliland to Syria, I tell you she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen south of Marseilles!"

Sevier responded with a grunt. Startled by Cohusac's sudden outburst of enthusiasm, he stared out into the dark, remembering the woman all too well. He had first discovered the fair Miriam about a fortnight before.

LOOKING from the arched, shadowy recesses of his bedroom one scorching afternoon, when the blasting wind filled the air with a golden haze of dust and the huddled white buildings in the Crater gave back the sunlight with a dazzling glare, he felt his eyes drawn irresistibly to the dark windows of Abu Khalil's house, which, rising above the intervening flat-roofed tenements permitted an uninterrupted view into his apartment.

In the shadow he perceived faintly the figure of a woman, unveiled, her soft white garment falling from her shoulder in graceful folds, her hair drawn back in heavy braids from a face which, even in the shadow, he could see was one of remarkable beauty. Sevier was aware that she regarded him with peculiar intensity. By swiftly turning his head, he had surprised a look upon her face that was flattering in its undivided attention. The moment she saw she was discovered, she withdrew, drawing her veil across her face and making a gesture that indicated impatience but not aversion.

The next day she had appeared again, making no effort to attract attention until Sevier raised his eyes and discovered her presence. Each succeeding day, however, she seemed to withdraw with greater reluctance, until finally a time came when she remained unveiled. This was so extraordinary that Sevier rose from his work and approached closer to the window that he might see her more clearly. First casting a swift glance over her shoulder, as though to make sure she were not observed, half lifting her veil so that still he could not see her as he had hoped, she bestowed upon him a look that pierced straight to his heart. Sevier knew the Arabs too well to misunderstand.

Nevertheless, with an effort he had left the window and sank into a chair in the long living-room, through which the wind swept freely from the dancing blue bay. He found himself trembling. The violence of this emotion amazed and then exasperated him. Ordinarily, he might not have hesitated to enter madly into the adventure, accepting the danger recklessly; but under present circumstances it was impossible to yield to such an influence.

In this unwelcome state of emotion, struck one day by a whimsical thought, he had brought Hillot Cohusac to his room and managed to have him present when Miriam appeared at her window.

For Cohusac, it was enough.

Into this line of recollection, Cohusac, who had been studying Sevier's countenance as the American looked gloomily off into the dark, interjected a remark, with an air of almost flippant casualness, that startled and confused Sevier as though he had been struck an unexpected blow.

"Well then, *copain*, I have made an appointment with her!"

For a moment Sevier could say nothing. He understood, with a tinge of bitterness, that Cohusac might well appear attractive to the woman. Nevertheless, he did not believe it possible for the young Frenchman with his crippled body to reach the women's apartments of Abu Khalil's house without discovery, and he refused to entertain the thought that Miriam had made an appointment to meet him outside. Even as he doubted, however, a pang of jealousy shot through him.

As the car began the long glide into the Crater, where, hugged tight in the arms of the silent mountains, clustered the old town of Aden, Cohusac, seeming to misconstrue Sevier's silence, exclaimed, with the petulance of a cripple:

"Oh, you don't think she would have me? You doubt me!"

"No," said Sevier grimly; "I don't doubt you. But I don't see how you are going to carry the thing through."

A curious expression flitted across Cohusac's face.

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing down into the town. "You can already see Abu Khalil's house. Come with me. You shall observe with your own eyes."

Instantly it occurred to Sevier that this would afford an excuse for approaching the house of Juda bin Ismael, separated from Abu Khalil's by a couple of twisted alleys and the blocklike tenement of a Banian trader. Therefore he nodded his head.

"Right-o! I'll go as far as bin Ismael's. I can watch you from there. But understand thoroughly that I don't intend to wait. If you get into trouble, it's your own lookout——"

"Oh, *là, là!*" laughed Cohusac hollowly. "Nearly all the fun for me is in the risk I run. A knife in the shoulder would be more of a thrill than the kiss of a succuba. My God, Dick, I live on the flavor of adventure! May his house burn and his children be scattered! Where's this dog of a driver going? Stop, worshiper of the sun!"

The Parsi driver brought the car to a stop in the camel compound, speechless with surprise and indignation.

Sevier promptly jumped down and lifted out Cohusac's slight frame as though it had been a child's.

The clear edge of the mountains was cutting the moon like a jagged knife. The streets of the Somali bazaar were already plunged in darkness, though the housetops still glittered like white sugar in the moonlight.

With Cohusac clinging to his shoulder and an arm about the cripple's waist, Sevier disappeared into the darkness with his strange little companion, while the Parsi driver, having received his fare, looked after them with vague curiosity, wondering what sordid adventure lured them into the bazaar after midnight.

LIKE two drunken figures, Sevier and Cohusac stumbled through the dark alleyways, where deep arches, like gaping maws, disclosed faint glimmers of dull light as the black cooks poked at the dying coals of their fires. Goats littered the way before them. Strange grumblings came from recumbent camels, whose masters, Bedawi fresh from the deserts of Al Yemen, fed them with wisps of straw to soothe them into silence.

From the massive square buildings of stone and cement rising above them came the faint, interminable whining of a baby, the whisper of voices, the wheezing snores of corpulent Banians spread upon their charpoys. In the distance could be heard the banging of heavy camel-carts collecting the refuse of the town and filling the atmosphere that hung about the houses with an indescribable stench.

Into this unattractive setting, Cohusac, the tottering little cripple, injected the bright spirit of romance. The opaque screen of mountains above which peeped the moon, the dimness of the alleyways obscuring the foulness of the bazaars, the shining whiteness of the housetops rising on arches above them, the mystery of whispering voices, the rattle of a lattice, the murmur of the sea faintly audible as it broke on the curving beach where the citadel of Cirrir rose impressively against a dim blue sky—these were elements that seemed to stir his soul.

Sevier felt the hand upon his shoulder trembling.

At last they reached the alley beyond the Banian's house which separated it from that of Abu Khalil. Beyond this, no further than several hundred yards, Sevier could see the outline of the building containing his own quarters. Cohusac's face was turned upward as his glowing eyes scanned the dark-gray wall of the building.

At a height of about fourteen feet there was a ledge above the alley, where the cooks and servants sometimes slept. To this he directed his attention. As he looked, he hesitated. His countenance betrayed a struggle of conflicting emotions. Suddenly he gave Sevier a gentle push with his hand, whispering thickly:

"Oh, Sevier, how well I could play Cyrano for your Valentine! Scale that wall, and I will soften her heart with a song. If she loves me, it is only at a distance. How can she love me near? Look! A little wall fourteen feet high that cuts us off from paradise—and I, whose soul reaches out to the sun, I cannot scale it."

Sevier drew sharply away.

"Cohusac," he said roughly, "don't be a fool! This affair is yours entirely—and alone."

"Idiot! How little you know of the value of life when you throw the promise of such love away lightly! I tell you it is you she wants—not I. With me, it was a game. I pretended I was you. Otherwise, she might have treated me with contempt. It twists my heart to tell you this, but it is so. Ah, bountiful God! She is the dawn and the sunset, the scorching sun of noon that burns you, and the cool, calm moon that looks at you and drives you mad. I have seen her closer than you. Her eyes are melting pools. She has grace and strength and spirit. She is Diana and she is Venus. Are you mad to reject the opportunity?"

There was a timbre in Cohusac's voice that seemed to ring from his soul and set Sevier's heart vibrating. The agitation mounted to his head. He, too, began to tremble. The wall was only fourteen feet high. He recalled that wonderful glimpse of her across the housetops.

"Only raise your voice and call," urged Cohusac, clutching his arm.

Sevier drew in a slow breath, holding himself well in hand, and said, with determination:

"Call yourself, then. I tell you, it is your affair entirely."

Cohusac turned his head abruptly and looked full at him. The next moment he leaned against the wall and put his face in the crook of his arm, murmuring brokenly in Arabic:

"*Astaghfaru'llah!* Allah, I ask Thy pardon! Give my arms the strength of my love. Let my body mount with my spirit." Raising his voice slightly, in a mixture of song and recitation, he uttered the seductive phrases of a popular Alexandrian ballad:

"Although your slumber may be deep,
Think not that love can yield to sleep.
By Allah, wild with love I flame.
And he who loves is ne'er to blame.
Dus, ya lella! Dus, ya lella!"

In the silence that followed, Sevier could hear Cohusac's tremulous breathing. Observing closely, he noticed all at once, with an unpleasant sensation, that Cohusac, who had again buried his face in the crook of his arm, was regarding him furtively out of one eye. Instantly he believed that his companion was playing a dangerous joke upon him. Disappointment and angry resentment overcame every other feeling. He turned away with a gesture of impatience.

"Do as you please," he said, in a matter-of-fact tone. "I'm off."

At that instant, a lattice rattled overhead. Nevertheless, Sevier continued his way until he reached the corner. Then he could not resist the impulse to look back.

Cohusac was pressed against the wall, his face turned upward with an intent expression. From the grated window above, Sevier saw a piece of white fluttering. He forced a short, mirthless laugh, and, turning into an arcade, made his way to the door of Juda bin Ismael's house.

THE sickly-looking doorkeeper, with red-rimmed, watery eyes and a pair of listless curls that hung in a bedraggled fashion in front of his ears, recognized him, and said that his master was waiting in his room. Thrusting his red tarboosh back on his thin head with an absent-minded gesture, he shuffled up a long, dark flight of steps terminating in a large, square room in which Juda bin Ismael himself sat dozing in a plush-upholstered chair. After placing upon a marble-topped rickety table a bottle of wine and some glasses, the servant retired down-stairs with long, sibilant sighs.

Juda bin Ismael was corpulent, pink, and fond of comfort. His hands were dimpled, his smile soft and gentle, his eyes slightly protuberant and of an indeterminate blue. He wore a red tarboosh on the back of his round, bald head. A long linen robe and a pair of overlarge Wellington boots of soft patent leather completed his costume. A downy white beard floated over his chest.

IN THE light of the oil-lamp which stood on the table between the two as they talked and sipped their wine, the Jew might have been taken for a poor rug dealer or a pedler in New York's Ghetto. As a matter of fact, he was one of the richest merchants of Africa, quiet, unobtrusive, shrewd, patient, and privately extremely charitable. His agents were scattered all over Arabia, Persia and northeast Africa.

"You are undertaking a dangerous thing, Mr. Sevier," said the old Jew gently. Sevier smiled disparagingly.

"These are dangerous days, Mr. Juda, and we've all got to take chances. But I don't believe the situation is by any means yet hopeless. For me, I don't see any extraordinary danger. However, that's of no particular importance. What I am anxious to do is to find the power behind this unrest. I don't deny the importance of German and Turkish intrigue; but I am certain there is some other power we can destroy if we once locate it."

"Women?" asked the Jew. Sevier was silent with amazement. "Why not?" insisted the Jew querulously. "They have seduced the prince with women—that's certain. Lidj Yassou is a weak and silly boy, with a face they think pretty and a surly temper. He was Menilek's favorite grandchild; but, just the same, he is no good. The Negus Mikail, his father, the king of Wallo, is a stern and strong man, violent and inflexible; but as to his son, he is nothing more than a fool. The *negus* believes the prince can do no wrong. Oh, the bold king is father of a craven prince. The lion's whelp is a jackal. God punishes these ruthless monarchs, Mr. Sevier, in their offspring."

"But what about the women?"

"Ah, the Turks and Arabs understand that. Since he is a Christian, the prince may marry none but a Christian, despite the secondary wives they permit in Abyssinia. Even though it is Christian, it is a corrupt country in many ways, Mr. Sevier." Sevier acknowled this with a nod. "Well then, they have brought him nautch-girls, Egyptian beauties from Alexandria, lithe houris from the deserts, Georgians with blue eyes and skins like cream. And he is not yet twenty years old! What does he care for an empire?"

"No, no!" insisted Sevier. "That might be sufficiently true if he were alone in this. But he is not alone. There are *rases* of importance offering him fealty. There is power behind him."

"It is impossible to say yet who is for him or against him."

"I know it. That is why I am going to Abyssinia to see for myself."

Juda bin Ismael fingered his glass of wine, raising his eyebrows with an expression of thoughtful abstraction. He looked at Sevier as though hesitating to express an idea that might rouse derision in the mind of an European. At last, however, he said doubtfully,

"There is a rumor of witchcraft."

"Witchcraft?"

"At least, I have heard that the prince is influenced by a sorceress who has come from Gondar on the Nile. It isn't necessary for me to explain my own thoughts, Mr. Sevier. I am a Jew. But think of the country you are in! The fame of this sorceress is great. I must say I have only heard of her recently; but, just the same, she is already known not only in Abyssinia but in Egypt and Arabia. They say she changes men into hyenas and crows. With a bit of grass she can choke the Nile. At a distance you may write what you will; she will read your thoughts as you write them. She can prophesy. These things we have heard often. What person of intelligence would heed them? Any Armenian pedler can do that kind of foolery. But, remember, we are speaking of Abyssinia. And I tell it to you as a fact—that this prince, Lidj Yassou, this weak and effeminate young man, has been known to go to the sorceress for advice. He wears a charm she gave him——"

"Well?"

"She openly prophesies a *jehad*. From that we may guess something, I think."

"We can surmise a very great deal," said Sevier, rising excitedly to his feet with a flash of inspiration. "I wish I had reports from Tripoli and that the situation were clearer in the Sudan."

"Ah, yes! Gondar is on the border of the Sudan, and Darfur is in revolt."

"Exactly."

"Dismiss the thought, Mr. Sevier. It is better to fix the house and not look at the distant storm-clouds—eh?"

"Yes; that is true. Abyssinia must be considered before everything else. But one more thing: Is this sorceress beautiful?"

The Jew smiled, and shrugged.

"Who can tell? It is not probable, though. What beautiful woman would concern herself with trickery like that? Her beauty alone would be sufficient. No; I think it more probable she is a desert-hag, muttering horrible curses to preserve herself."

"Do you know anything else of her?"

"No. You know already that Lidj Yassou has left his capital and gone to Harrar?"

"Yes—and ignored the protest of the foreign legations."

"And of the Grand Council of *rases*——"

"That, at least, is a hopeful sign—eh?"

"But too late. He is already apostate."

"And what is happening at Addis Abeba?"

"The great *rases* are assembling from all over. Whether they will uphold him or not, I cannot tell. There are good and brave men among them—and they may dethrone him."

"And at Harrar?"

"Maukara, the eunuch, is in Harrar town; and young Ras Taffari is also in the province—both good men— But what can we say of them until their deeds speak?"

"By God," exclaimed Sevier, "we will crush this prince at Harrar!"

"With the help of God, then. But do not forget his father, the Negus Mikail."

Abruptly the conversation changed then to a discussion of finances, the transmission of reports and the operations of new agents. Sevier was to draw without limit upon any of Juda bin Ismael's agents, who would be duly informed of his presence as a trader.

SEVIER took a deep, slow breath of the night air as he swiftly reviewed all he had accomplished up to that moment. He was satisfied. Flinging out his hands with a gesture that implied a certain delight in facing danger openly, he turned and made his way toward his quarters. He came once more to the alley where he had left Cohusac not more than half an hour before. He was astonished at himself for so soon forgetting the situation in which he had left his companion. Now it came back to him with greater vividness.

As he came to the spot where he had last seen Cohusac, he paused instinctively and, with a quickening heart, looked upward again to scan the gray wall, dark with the heavy shadows that had risen as the moon sank behind the mountains. It was difficult to make out objects clearly, but with his knowledge of the building he was able quickly to locate the terrace above the fourteen-foot wall to which he supposed Cohusac had ascended.

He wondered if the young Frenchman had actually accomplished it. For a moment he was lost in speculation. How was it possible for that cripple to scramble up the rough perpendicular wall without assistance? Or, if with assistance, then without discovery? He began to doubt. If, on the other hand, Cohusac had not succeeded and the girl had not come down to him—and it was extremely improbable that she had—then might she not still be awake? Would she not rouse to his voice if he sang to her as Cohusac had done? For another moment he hesitated.

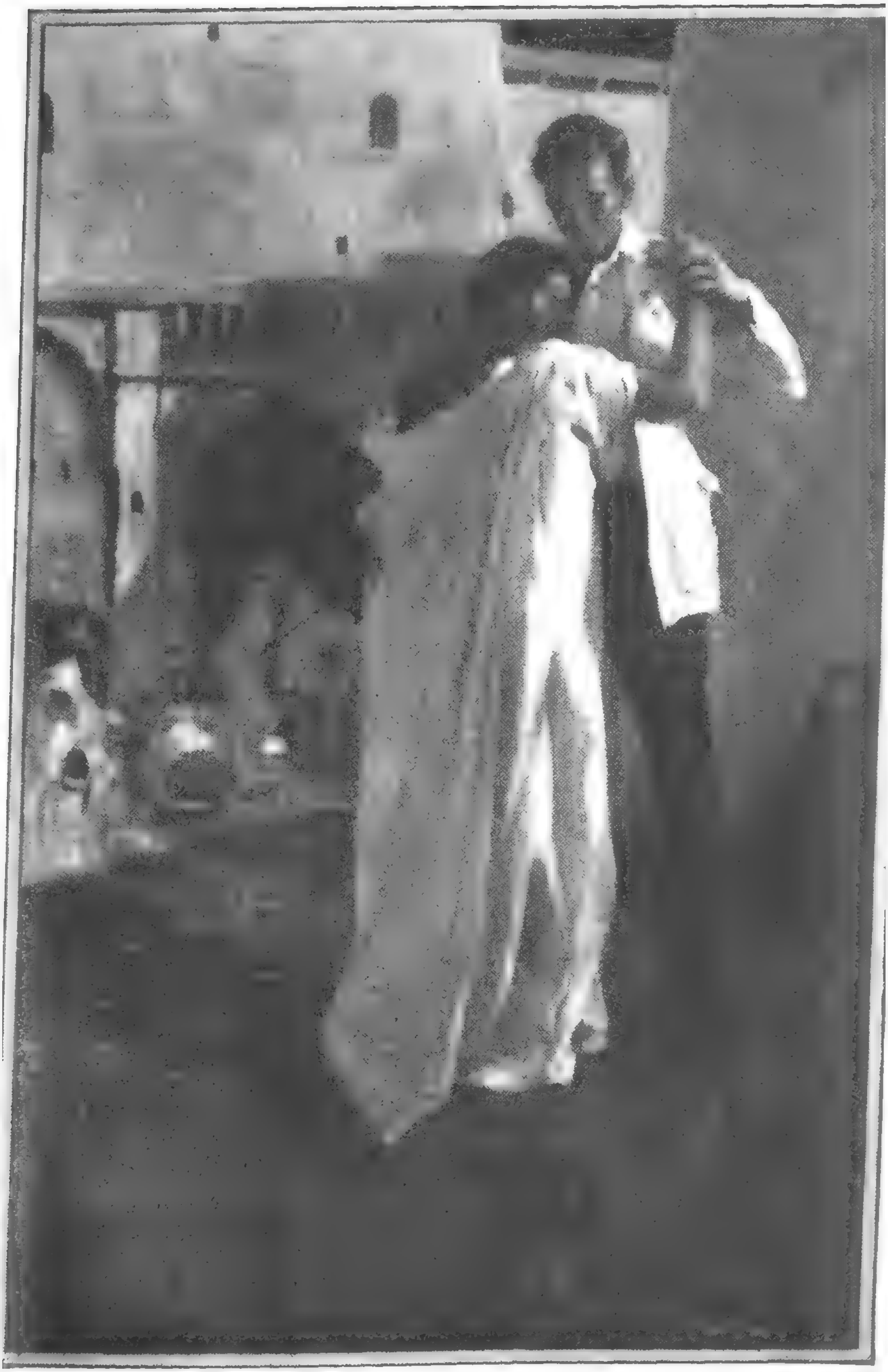
Distantly there came to his ears the faint challenge of a sentry. Its significance came home to Sevier. From above there broke sharply the sounds of a struggle, a muffled cry, the rasping creak of a charpoy overturned, the thud of a blow, a sudden sharp scream, a choked voice gasping:

"Dick! Dick! For God's sake help, Sevier!"

Without a second's thought, Sevier attacked the wall. There was a drain-pipe and a long oblique crack in the cement surface in which he found footholds that brought him quickly to the edge of the terrace. Tumbling over this in his impulsive haste, he lost his footing and plunged forward on his hands and knees amid a litter of earthenware and household furniture.

Instantly two figures flung themselves upon him, and before he could struggle to his feet, he felt himself held in the grasp of strong men. He could not see his assailants.

With a spasmodic effort he flung them



He could tell by the grip he had on her firm, smooth arms that she must be graceful and strong. "Who are you?" he demanded.

off. One, stumbling over the edge of the parapet, plunged with a yell into the dusty alley below. The other fell with a clatter in a heap of débris. Instantly Sevier was on him like a terrier, beating him into silence with whatever he could lay his hands on, knowing well that the moment he assumed the defensive he ran an excellent chance of being disemboweled.

AS SOON as he was free once more, he backed quickly toward the parapet, furiously resolved that if Cohusac had not yet made his escape, he would abandon him. Panting from his struggle, cursing brokenly with rage at the foolhardiness of the French youth, he nevertheless called in a low, penetrating voice:

"Hillot! I am here, Hillot!"

At his feet he heard a moan. Bending down, he touched the frail body of the Frenchman. Without another word he gripped him under the arms and dragged him to the edge of the terrace.

The place was humming like a hive. Hoarse voices could be heard, shouting and cursing. The voices of women chattered and called in high-pitched accents full of mixed terror and curiosity. There was a great scraping of charpoys on the cement roofs, a banging of doors, shuffling of bare feet, and suddenly the shrill whistle of a police *askari* attracted by the sudden din.

Slipping off his cummerbund and belt, Sevier buckled them together, knotted one end in Cohusac's belt, and, lying on his stomach, lowered him as far as he could, then dropped him into the thick dust.

As he scrambled to his feet and faced about, another figure confronted Sevier. Unhesitatingly he threw himself upon it. Instantly he recoiled. It was a woman—and she had not screamed!

Sevier seized her by the arms and backed to a point from which he could at the first warning vault into the street below.

The increasing tumult about them only served to emphasize their temporary isolation in that dark corner of the towering building. Sevier had a moment's respite to catch his breath and consider the situation. There was something about the woman that brought his excitement and rage simmering down into a curious silence. It was characteristic of him that, unshaken by the uproar, he found it possible to take a lively interest in her.

The perfume of attar of roses hung about her. He could tell by the grip he had on her firm, smooth arms that she must be graceful and strong. Nor was there any doubt about her youthfulness. A compelling curiosity surged over him.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

Her murmured reply vibrated like a low-toned porcelain bell tapped with a kid mallet. It had the strangely stirring quality known in the Arabic as "*sa-aja*," the cooing cadence of a dove.

"I am called Miriam, my lord."

Sevier's heart seemed to burn with flame. Trembling, he released her. The next instant, an impulse of sheer romantic recklessness surged up within him, and he took her in his arms and turned her face up so that he might examine her features more closely. He saw nothing but her eyes. Like pools of dark liquid amber in which fire smoldered, they looked at him, returning his gaze with calm confidence and an overwhelming tenderness. The soft contact of her body was more compelling than the rough force of his assailants. As he looked into her eyes, he forgot everything but her. Embracing her tightly, he kissed her.

It was a delirious kiss. It stunned his power of reason. All thought fled. His heart, mounting to his lips, melted in an exquisite contact; while the girl's arms, twining about his neck, held him convulsively. Lifting his face, he drew a long, trembling breath, and in that instant became aware that searchers were approaching.

"Beware!" he gasped. "They will discover us! Alone, you are safe. With me, you are surely lost. Let me go—quickly."

Instead of releasing him, she held him tighter. Disturbed at this foolhardiness, and yet touched at such evidence of complete abandonment, he looked at her again, expostulating. She said nothing, but continued to hold him tight. He could hear voices close at hand. He tried to push away from her.

"Let go!" he said decisively.

All at once she began to cry out, holding on to him with all her strength:

"Abdullah! Help! Help!"

What sort of foolish scrape has Sevier got himself into on the eve of his important mission? See the next instalment of "The Witch of Gondar" in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 14th.

Little Journeys Back Home

When Fear Was Forgotten

Second of a Series of Stories Which the Author Hopes Will Contribute Something Toward Wiping Away the Years, Toward Taking You Back to the Days of Your Youth

By Henry Francis Granger

Illustration by Harry Fisk

IT BEGAN to snow about dark, and at eight-thirty, when Bobby King took the last look out of his dormer-window, it was floating down in a feathery mass, through which the street-light in front of the house shone dimly, like the yellow ball of a Chinese lantern.

"Gee!" he muttered gloomily as he climbed into bed. "If it keeps this up, it'll spoil the ice." And then he comforted himself with the thought that snow in such feathery flakes never lasted long, and just before he fell asleep he was worrying vaguely lest it might turn to rain.

But it did not turn to rain; neither did the feathery flakes continue. Gradually it grew colder, and the flakes shrank up, consolidated and beat down like thrown rice, and then the wind rose and drove it in furious blasts, whipping it across the open spaces, piling it in the corners, massing it against fences and walls, festooning the rubbish of dooryards, the uneven surfaces of the quiet village streets with domes and minarets in miniature, and raising strange mounds and ridges to transform the iron contours of winter under soft lines of beauty.

And then the wind died down and the stars shone clear, sparkling with a blue light. And as the hours passed and Bobby King slept, it again grew warmer, a mist blotted out the stars and the snow came back, falling gently.

When Bobby woke, every fence-post and picket was snow-capped; the naked limbs of the maples in front of the house were wound in ermine, and the drifts of the earlier, colder hours were blanketed in continuous waves by the elfin fingers of the snow.

With his well-greased skating-shoes laced tight, he set out before breakfast to estimate and appraise what, to him, was the damage done by the snow. He waded through the drift that covered the sidewalk, reared against the obstruction of the fence, and scuffed through to the earlier wind-swept expanse of the open street to find, to his delight, that the later snow had only fallen to the depth of a couple of inches.

"Gee!" he muttered, dancing in his delight. "Bet it blew off the old ice and there's just this trackin' snow on top." Entirely reassured, he floundered back, plowing a new path through the drift, to bolt hurriedly a tasteless breakfast.

"Bet I bring you home a dandy mess of suckers!"

He grinned up at his father when, with his newspaper-wrapped lunch bulging in one pocket, skates hanging from his shoulder, he gingerly felt the needle-points of the five-pronged fish-spear he called a "trident."

"You got dandy points on the old spear, dad!" he cried, with sage approval.

"It will do"—the father smiled, more than repaid for his hour of careful grinding—"until you jam it down on the stones as usual."

"Goin' to be careful to-day," the boy promised. "No old shallow water's goin' to fool me."

With the fish-spear over his shoulder, he plunged for the third time through the drift in front of the house, his father watching from the doorway.

"Don't know but you better shovel that walk first," he called after him.

Bobby's heart sank.

"Gee!" he gulped, at thought of a morning spoiled, and then his agonized glance read the grin on his father's face and, with a shout, he broke into a run. But he slowed down before he reached the corner of Main Street. The white silence of the snowy morning threw back a single voice with disconcerting clearness, and he walked silently, zigzagging to furrow the unbroken drifts.

The blood was tingling in his veins, and he had decided the day was warm when he turned in at the last house but one on Main Street, where Theodore waited.

"It's as cold as the dickens." Theodore shivered in the doorway as Bobby stamped some part of the snow from his high-laced shoes.

"Naw; it's warm," he disputed, as he came into the kitchen, his way marked by patches of snow. "I'll bet you the old wind just whipped the ice clean—all but just this little snow on top."

"Bet you it's so snowy we can't stomp 'em up."

Theodore had overslept and was inclined to be pessimistic.

"Bet you it ain't! Snow's all blown off the flats. Can see the grass plain on Thorn's lot—guess I noticed!"

Theodore still grumbled as he sat down to breakfast, but his spirits revived as, that finished, he laced on his heavy shoes, and he was entirely cheerful when, ready to start, he felt the needle-points of Bobby's trident.

"Didn't think you'ld ever get 'em sharp, the way you busted 'em the last time."

"Dad did it," said Bobby proudly.

"If you'd get a spring like mine, wouldn't need to sharpen it." boasted Theodore.

"Huh," grunted Bobby. "Springer-spear's no good, "less its a whale." It was the endless argument as to the relative merits of the spring over the stiff-pronged spear, and it served to keep each boy enamored of his own.

"Didn't I get more fish 'n you last time?"

"Just because I busted into them rocks," said Bobby scornfully. "Bet you I don't jam down on no stones to-day."

BUT at last they were off, Theodore carrying an ax in addition to skates and spear. The cold nipped them sharply as they came out from the warmth of the kitchen.

"Told you 'twas a fierce day," said Theodore, as Bobby pressed his mittened hands to his tingling face.

"Got cold while you was eatin' your old breakfast," was Bobby's ready explanation.

But when they reached the Main Street bridge, both boys were comfortably aglow.

"Gettin' warmer!" cried Bobby. "I just knew it was goin' to be a bully day."

The river at its widest expanse above the bridge stretched an unmarred surface of white to the turn, a half-mile away. Below the dam, which backed up the water to the pondlike depth of the stretch above the bridge, the shallow stream ran noisily over a rocky bed, the mid-channel open between narrow strips of shore-ice.

For a time the two boys stood in inexpressible appreciation. The Tobe's Hill road stretched diagonally over the hill, an unbroken ribbon of white, the scattered bushes on either side a fairy forest under the clinging drapery of the snow.

And then they scrambled down the bank, and, each kicking a space comparatively clear of snow, they began the finger-numbing task of fastening skates to snowy shoes. But their skates on, they deposited fish-spears and ax on the river-bank, for they must first mark the untouched surface of this patch of ice that was the village rink.

"Let's write our names, so the fellows will know we was here first." And Theodore swung off with waving arms, turning and pivoting, swinging this way and that, circling in shaky, staggering loops, to finish with a long sweep and a quick turn at Bobby's side. "How's that? Ain't it a pippin?"

And Bobby grunted approval, swinging

off to mark an untouched space for his own, finishing with equal satisfaction.

For a little time they viewed their work with the satisfaction of master craftsmen. No eye but a boy's who had seen it done could have traced a name in the lines they had marked, but they called it good—and so it was good.

And then they must chop a test-hole to see how thick the ice was, and then, although they had not expected this, Theodore speared a sucker through the hole.

"Gee! The old river's just full of fish to-day!" cried Bobby. And Theodore skated to the further shore and climbed the bank on his skates to cut a branch from the nearest bush, upon which they strung the fish through its gills. And then Theodore pounded upon the ice with the ax, skating in a wide circle, and Bobby stood with spear dipped at the hole, but no other unlucky fish passed under.

"It's too wide for spearin' here." Theodore was skating back. "Let's get started before some one else comes along."

Then, side by side, they skated silently up the river.

Above the bend the river narrowed, and where it flowed along the edge of Harlow's woods, the frozen channel was not over twenty feet wide, although the stony river-bed stretched dry for many yards upon the other side. In the spring the river was a wide torrent, but in the summer and winter it was but a narrow thread of a stream, shrunken to the deepest channel when one passed beyond the wide, pond-like stretch above the dam.

But to the two boys it was a mighty tributary flowing through a wilderness of forest and field, the enchanted land of boyhood's imagining. They knew all its quiet pools, its wild rapids, its "bottomless holes"—a river without "bottomless holes" would not be a boy's river—and they knew the intersecting creeks that trickled in from marshy meadows or tumbled more boisterously down narrow ravines. And in some of these were trout, wary and small from much fishing, but the boys caught them occasionally in the early summer, fishing shamelessly with worms for bait, sneering scornfully at flies. But the sucker was king of the river, and the boys fished for suckers from the banks in the roily water when the flood was subsiding in spring and speared them through the ice in winter, but at other seasons they were considered wormy, and the sucker was tabu.

For five miles above the dam the river was considered "skatable," barring a couple of rapids that never had frozen to bear ring ice within Theodore's experience, who was nearly fourteen, nearly two years older than Bobby, and some other shallows where one must take to the bank; but they called it a five-mile stretch of skating-ice before it split into two narrow creeks and was lost in the unexplored wilderness of diverging valleys.

Some day they were going to explore those valleys—some day when they had more time—but now the dividing water marked the limit of their wandering, although, if the ice was good, they always went this far when they were out for a full day.

And to-day they skated slowly past Harlow's woods, scanning the bank and the ground under the trees for tracks, quite ready to abandon the spearing temporarily for the fun of poking into a rabbit-hole or for a glimpse of a squirrel on the naked limb of a tree. But there were no tracks this morning.

"No use lookin'," was Theodore's verdict. "It snowed till past daylight, and there won't be any rabbits out till to-night."

"Suppose we try a hole here," suggested Bobby.

"Might as well," agreed Theodore. "Though it ain't as good a place as Currey's."

"'Course it ain't," said Bobby scornfully. "Ain't any place as good as Currey's in the whole river."

But, with the acknowledged better place ahead, they stopped and cut a hole, and before they skated on, each had speared a fish.

THEN, for a couple of miles, the river stretched between open meadows with but occasional willow clumps and the weeds and brier patches of the low, crumbling banks, and the water was shallowed here and the ice rough, the vibration painfully accentuating the fact that their toes were numb with cold.

Then, for a long stretch, there was shell-ice under the snow where the skates cut through at every attempted stroke, and they were forced to plod along at a wearying, floundering walk. But the ice grew firm again, and they were at the deeper, narrow stretch before the turn at Currey's, where a brook met the river. This was a famous place for suckers and their real objective.

They cut two holes here on either side of the narrow way. It was not always necessary for one of them to drive by pounding on the ice at Currey's, and each stood at his hole, peering through the cold green water to the mud bottom below. And the suckers were running to-day, and soon the spears were busy and gaffed fish were flopping upon the ice, dyeing the snow pinkly.

"Gee! Did you ever see 'em so thick?" panted Bobby, as he drew up a big one, sending it with a jerk far out on the ice.

"Look out you don't jab the bottom," warned Theodore.

"Huh—it's mud bottom!" scorned Bobby, thrusting wildly, missing the fish and sending his spear down into the mud to strike a buried stone, and when he drew it out, one point was hopelessly battered.

"Gee!" he said ruefully.

"I told you to watch out," taunted Theodore, but Bobby was too troubled to find any fitting retort. His careless jab had spoiled the point of the middle prong, and his continuing success was more than problematical, for now he must strike skilfully, depending upon the two outer barbs.

But he set himself for careful work, and he landed the first fish at which he struck and then he missed the next half-dozen in succession. And then he stood disconsolately watching Theodore while, excitement and interest ebbing, the cold took hold upon him. Shivering a little, he skated back to a clump of willows and cut and trimmed a long, slender branch, leaving one short stub protruding Y-shape at the larger end.

When he had skated back with this, he was warmer, and he grew cheerful again as he gathered up the scattered fish and threaded them on the branch.

"Gee, Theo! We never got such a mess as this."

"Golly! They'll make two strings apiece." Theodore dropped his spear and was skating back to the willows.

Bobby laid down his fish and followed, and this time with great care each selected and cut two long, pliant withes. Threaded in double strings, the catches made a brave showing.

"Gee! Wouldn't the fellows be sore if they saw us with these?" gloated Bobby.

"Say—we got so many we can go back early and show 'em," suggested Theodore.

"I'll bet you we will!" cried Bobby, and then a new thought intruded. "Gee! We ain't et our lunch."

"We'll go round the bend to Currey's grove and eat, and then we'll spear a few more and beat it home," decided Theodore.

Gathering up the fish and spears, and Theodore carrying the ax, which was now a troublesome burden, they skated ahead to Currey's grove. There they took off their skates and, brushing the snow from a half-rotted log, they built a fire against it, and then, sitting upon the log at either side of the fire, they ate their luncheons. How good it felt to stretch their legs naturally, free from the confining clamp of the skates, and how wonderful that cold lunch tasted after the toil of the morning and with that toasting fire between them, those wonderful strings of fish upon the snow before them and visions of the envy they would rouse floating in their minds!

"Gee! This is the bulliest day yet!" cried Bobby, with his mouth full of icy pie.

Theodore nodded, too busily content for speech.

BUT, luncheon finished, and drowsy under the sting of the air and the heat of the fire, the long skate back loomed forebodingly. Their stiffening muscles ached at the thought, and wet shoes pinched feet that were suddenly covered with sore spots. Then the cheer died out of the fire, and they shivered as their faces burned and their shoes steamed in the heat.

"Gee! It's an awful ways back," groaned Bobby.

"And I got this old ax." Theodore kicked the discarded tool wrathfully.

Gradually the fire died down and the cold gripped them miserably, and rather than gather more wood, they began to refasten their skates.

"Anyway, we'll show 'em more fish than they ever saw," muttered Theodore, and the thought restored some of their earlier animation and they stood up stiffly, prepared to go.

They cheered up some as they skated

back to the bend, and at the holes where they had had such wonderful luck they stopped irresolutely. It was hard to go on when they could get more, but the strings of fish were heavy.

"I've got all I can lug," Theodore declared crossly.

"I'll carry your spear," offered Bobby. "Both of 'em ain't as heavy as that ax." But in his mind lingered a fragment of desire to get more fish.

But Theodore accepted the offer quickly and passed over his spear, and with two spears and two branches of fish, Bobby decided that he had enough. They faced resolutely homeward. The ice was smooth below Currey's, and as their muscles limbered up, they skated easily in restored confidence.

"Never went back as early as this," said Bobby regretfully.

"We ain't back yet." Theodore remembered the stretch of shell-ice and the longer way beyond. "And, besides, we want to get back early if we're goin' to find any of the fellers."

Bobby agreed, and the pace quickened. And then they struck the stretch of shell-ice and floundered to a walk. Weary, impatient to get back, and burdened by the fish, this piece of hard going nearly exhausted them. Now their skates cut through sharply under the additional weight and, so cutting, stuck, the points of their skates catching the shell-ice as they lifted their feet.

They stumbled at every step, and at every stumble the slippery stems of willow would slip in their mittened grasp, and every time they dropped a string, half-frozen fish would slip from the end to be painfully recovered from the snow.

"Gee! It's fierce; we'll never get back," Bobby muttered wearily; but neither boy could have imagained the possibility of abandoning a single fish.

BUT at last they were past the shell-ice, and now the rocklike surface of the rough stretch set the runners vibrating until their feet became as wooden blocks hanging to their aching legs. Their progress had grown so automatic and weariness settled so heavily upon them that they never noticed when they struck smooth ice again above Harlow's woods.

But here Theodore began to forge ahead, and at Harlow's woods he led by several yards.

Then he stopped suddenly, with a cry of amazement.

"Golly! Hustle up!" he called back to the lagging Bobby. "What do you think of that?" he shrilled, as Bobby came up. Stretching across the ice in front of them ran a line of enormous tracks.

Incoherent in his excitement, Theodore was repeating, "Golly!" in a voice that wavered and cracked.

Bobby stood in breathless bewilderment.

"Gee! What a dog!" he gasped.

"Dog! Dog!" Theodore's voice rose in a cry of derision.

"If it ain't a dog, what is it?" Bobby was tired and in no mood to be laughed at.

"Ain't no dog half as big as that, and, 'sides, look at the shape of 'em!"

Bobby was looking, his eyes wide with wonder.

"No dog don't have feet like that."

The impossible was hovering over Bobby.

"Bear," he whispered, his mouth suddenly dry.

"Sure is!" gasped Theodore.

"But there ain't no bears."

"Didn't somethin' make those tracks?"

This was unanswerable, for the tracks were there. They came diagonally across the dry river-bed, turned and crossed the ice in the most direct line for the opposite bank, and there, on the short, steep bank, was a deep scratch, almost a furrow, where the animal had slipped and scrambled up the bank, and, beyond, the tracks lay plain on the untrodden snow. Whether they were bear-tracks or not, something had made them, and that something was not a dog. Both boys were now sure of this.

"They weren't there when we went up this mornin'," said the bewildered Bobby.

" 'Course they wasn't. Them tracks ain't a minute old." Theodore was studying the scratches in the bank with a critical eye.

Bobby took a couple of uneasy strokes down-stream.

"Suppose he comes back!"

Theodore glanced apprehensively through the woods but stood his ground.

"Couldn't catch us on skates," he declared boldly.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1922

Slowly Bobby moved back to his side. Every vestige of weariness had left them now.

"How could a bear get here?" he questioned.

" 'Member the day when we was shootin' squirrels over back of Tucker's? 'Member the noise we heard?"

"Gee! I'll bet he lives up in that old gully." At last Bobby had an explanation that satisfied him. But in a moment doubt returned. It had been too firmly impressed upon his mind that there were no bears in this part of the country. "If there was a bear, somebody would have seen it."

"We wouldn't have seen it, 'cept for the snow." Again the foundations of Bobby's belief trembled. The deviation from fact was unnoted; seeing these tracks and seeing a bear were one and the same thing in the minds of both boys.

"Suppose he's gone back to Tucker's gully?"

"Those tracks are headed right for Harlow's place." A new ambition was beginning to smolder in Theodore's heart.

"Jim Harlow's got a rifle," said Bobby, and the remark fanned the desire to flame.

"Let's go up in the woods a little ways and see if he keeps on for Harlow's." Bobby stared aghast at the suggestion. "Come on," urged Theodore; "don't be a 'fraid-cat."

"We ain't got no gun." Bobby's voice was weak.

Theodore's desire grew stronger, but he wisely concluded that the time was not yet ripe to give it voice. He was fired with zeal to go bear-hunting, but he knew he would not stir a step without Bobby, who was plainly unwilling to go. Some understanding of the unwisdom of his positive statement as to the freshness of the tracks came to him.

"I'll bet you he's been gone an hour," he said, with as much conviction as he had recently proclaimed the tracks less than a minute old.

Bobby gave this equal credit with the earlier statement.

"Then he's way over the hill by now." There was more curiosity than apprehension in his voice.

"Sure he is! Let's go up a little ways; we'll keep our skates on." This was the decisive suggestion, for Bobby, too, believed they could skate away from a bear.

Still carrying the ax, spears and fish, they scrambled up the bank on their skates and followed the tracks warily into the woods. The tracks led straight toward Harlow's, and advancing upon a house where there were men, to say nothing of a rifle, was a less chilling proposition than following into the woods away from help. The nearer they drew to Harlow's the more confident they became.

"Wish I had my old gun," said Bobby.

This was Theodore's cue. They were a long way from the river now, and walking on skates was both wearisome and slow, and Theodore was confident now that Bobby would go bear-hunting in earnest.

"Let's take off our skates and sneak up to Harlow's—it s just over the hill—and get Jim an' his rifle," he suggested, and this time he found Bobby equally as eager.

And so they turned off the trail to a convenient log and sat down to remove their skates.

"We can leave our fish and spears and things at Harlow's till we get back," said Theodore, struggling with his skates. The clamps were frozen. And as they sat, bent forward, working at the frozen clamps, oblivious of their surroundings, a long black head poked in between them from behind.

FOR a moment they remained as motionless as though turned to stone, every sensation suspended; then, with a simultaneous yell that sounded horrible in their own ears but in reality reached the frosty air as a strangling moan of terror, they lunged forward, to stumble and pitch face downward in the snow.

And a black bear, sniffing the air with twitching nostrils, stepped ponderously over the log. The boys saw him coming, a vast shape of doom, and they scrambled forward with choking cries, striving to gain a footing with knees and ankles suddenly limp and powerless. After a nightmare effort that, to their stricken minds, seemed to cover an eternity of time, they were plunging forward through the woods.

Spears and ax were abandoned, but, by some curious reflex, Theodore still clung to both strings of fish, and Bobby had grasped and retained his hold upon one.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the bear ravenously bolting the other. Then the boys ran wildly for the river-bank.

The grade was in their favor, their only hope of salvation to reach the ice, and despite the handicap of skates on the uneven ground strewn with leaves, brush and stones under the snow, it is doubtful if they ever negotiated the same distance more rapidly in their shoes. But before they had covered fifty yards the bear had finished his string of fish and was lumbering after them, rolling along ponderously but at surprising speed.

FROM the first jump the boys had been putting forth every effort of which they were capable, but the bear was lessening the distance at every stride.

Now he was close—so close that one of Bobby's flying feet struck him, and this caused Bobby to lurch against Theodore, who stumbled and pitched forward and, striving to recover his own balance, Bobby's skate turned under him, twisting him sidewise and sent him sprawling across the broad back of the bear.

With a woof of astonishment the bear jerked back, and as Bobby rolled to the ground, the animal rose upon its hind legs. He saw the vast shape above him. His last hope fled, and he buried his face in his arms and sobbed in the helplessness of a terrified child.

Then something pushed against him, and he opened his eyes to find the bear nosing under him, pushing him away, shoving him over the snow, and he heard Theodore's voice, hoarse, panting.

"Beat it! Beat it!"

It brought back the will to try, and he rolled over and over on the snow, scrambled to his hands and knees and staggered to his feet. The bear was eating the second string of fish that had been crushed under Bobby's fallen body. Theodore was twenty feet away, running drunkenly under the impulse of the last breathless effort of which he was capable. With a wild cry of: "Wait! Oh, wait!" Bobby staggered after him.

But the bear took longer to finish the second bunch of fish, and with the immediate menace removed, Theodore's knees caved under him and he dropped breathless, entirely spent, at the foot of a tree and, equally as helpless, Bobby staggered up to drop beside him.

For a little they lay almost unconscious. Then dimly they realized that the bear was coming on again.

At first they only stared in panting dread, the strength gone from their muscles, their lungs gasping for air that seemed but to grasp and choke them. For the moment even terror failed to spur them to further effort. But the bear came on more slowly now, and they had benefited by the rest, short as it was, and they dragged themselves erect and started on, Theodore still clinging to his two strings of fish.

But as they moved the bear increased his pace, and again he was gaining on them. The blood was pounding in their ears; strange lights danced in front of their eyes. Breathless, spent, they had reached the limit. They fell again just at the foot of a great beech tree, and with a last effort crawled on their hands and knees to place the trunk of the tree between them and the oncoming bear.

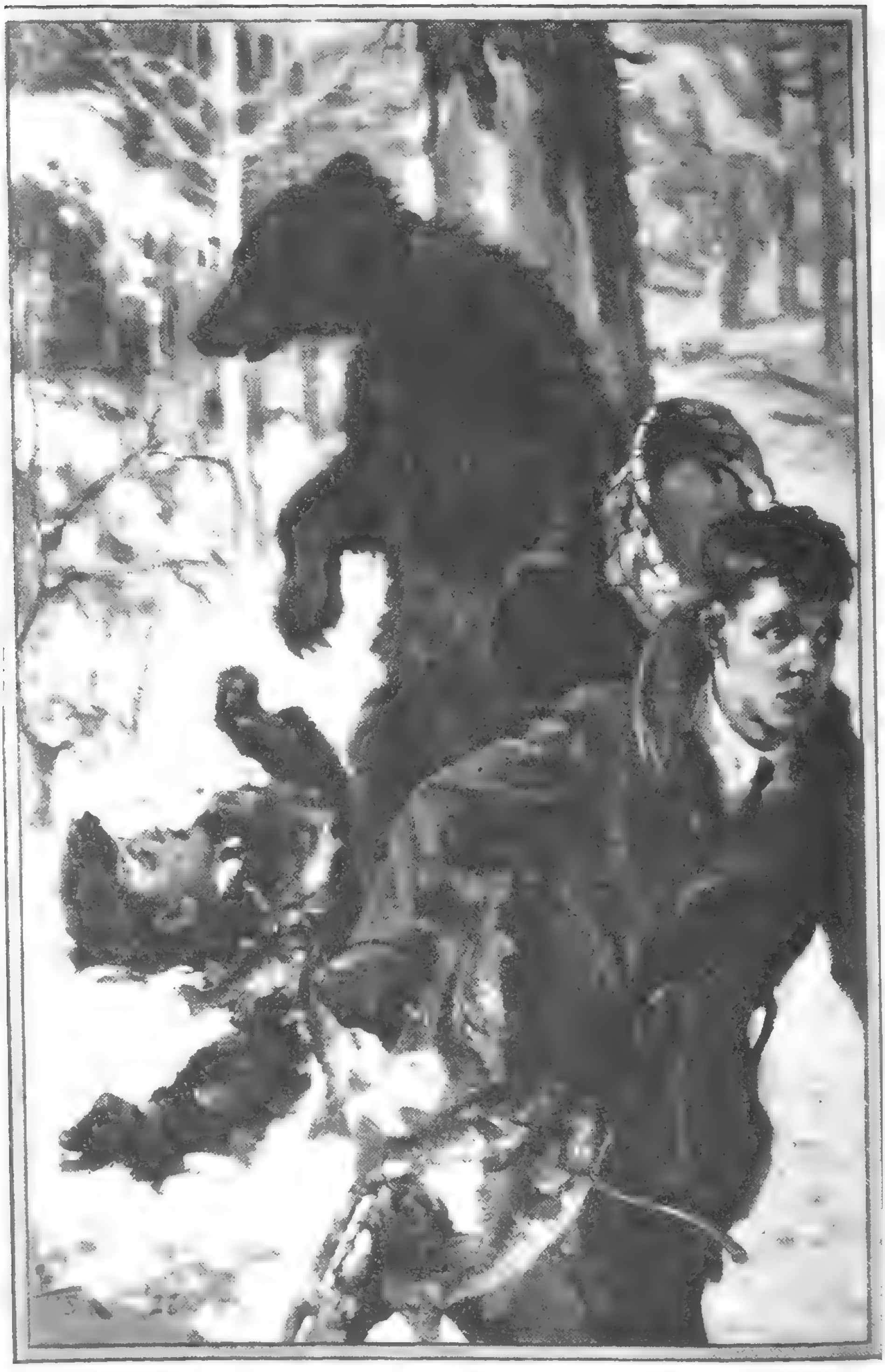
What evermight happen, they had made the last effort of which they were capable, and in a lethargy of despair they huddled behind the tree, too beaten, even, to cry. Even Theodore, now, had lost his fish, and was not conscious of the fact.

The bear came up and stopped. They heard him puffing and nosing about on the other side of the tree, and at every moment they expected him to pounce upon them; but they were too spent to move, too frightened to look. Then they heard a dull thud, as of a heavy body falling, and the terror of something unknown was added to the burden of frightfulness that overwhelmed them.

A minute passed and nothing happened, but with regained breath came, if possible, increased fright. The numbness of exhaustion lifting, realization of their desperate predicament came more clearly before them. They were helpless. The bear could catch them before they could reach the ice. There was no longer any doubt of this; it was futile to run.

Then they thought to climb, and they lifted their haggard eyes to the trunk of the tree, but it was a great, smooth beech and the lowest limbs were far above their reach.

"We can't climb it." Bobby shivered at Theodore's hoarse whisper. Then again,



As Bobby rolled to the ground, the animal rose upon its hind legs. He saw the vast shape above him. His last hope fled.

for a long time, they huddled silently. But still the bear did not come, and they began vaguely to wonder. They were breathing free again and their strength was coming back. And with returning strength, hope stirred, and they began to wonder if there were not yet some way whereby they might escape.

Then the silence and the strange absence of the bear filled them with new terror. They had expected him to pounce upon them—what more horrible fate did this delay presage?

At last Theodore could stand it no longer. Cautiously he leaned out to peer round the trunk. Just at the other side the bear lay, stretched out like a great dog. In front of his nose two fish lay stiff upon the snow, and a few feet away, where he had dropped it when he began to crawl to the tree, lay a single string of fish.

Wonderingly, his voice quavering, Theodore reported,

"He's layin' around there, and he's et one of my strings of fish."

And then Bobby found courage to look.

"He's asleep," he reported and again hope stirred.

Then Theodore took another peek, only to jerk back in sudden panic.

"He's awake! He saw me!" he gasped. Frozen with fear, they heard the bear shift his position. Now they were certain he would be upon them in another moment, and again they were tensed to make another desperate run for their lives, but they waited for the next movement of the bear.

But a long minute passed without a sound, and again Bobby stretched out for a look. The bear had shifted his position, curling up, his head half turned from the tree. Bobby stared, scarce believing the evidence of his eyes, but when he drew back, there was the strength of renewed confidence in his whispering voice.

"He's got a collar on."

Quickly Theodore looked in turn.

"Bobby, it looks like Old Tom." In his relief, he spoke aloud.

CRAYTON, where the boys lived, was a village of about two thousand inhabitants, but ten miles away by trolley was the city of Middlesex. Middlesex, with its twenty thousand, was the metropolis of the section, and midway between it and Crayton lay Pinehurst, the amusement park of the trolley company, generously patronized in summer by the inhabitants of both communities.

And chief among the permanent attractions of Pinehurst was a menagerie, and the principal feature of this small collection of native animals was Old Tom, the black bear. In summer, Old Tom was chained to a post in the grove with only a low chicken-wire fence fending visitors from the circle of his chain, but in winter he was caged. The bear was a great favorite, and employees of the park handled him as indifferently as though he were a great, friendly dog, while small boys commonly shared their picnic-lunches with him.

The afternoon before, a keeper had neglected to fasten Old Tom's cage, and some time during the night the bear had walked out. His absence was not discovered until morning, and since then every farm within a radius of twenty miles that could be reached by 'phone had been notified of his escape and assured that he was harmless, while searchers afoot and in automobiles were scouring the countryside, hoping to come upon him before some unknowing person might do him harm. The snow and wind of the night had covered his tracks in the grove, and, after twenty-four hours, no trace of him had been reported.

Perhaps Old Tom had hidden with the instinct of the wild, or it may be that he just happened to escape detection, but certain it is that when the bear found Theodore and Bobby, he was both lonesome and hungry. Old Tom knew boys; they were his friends and fed him, and these boys smelled deliciously of fish. He had made for them in full assurance as soon as he detected their presence, and as usual these boys had food and they had stuffed him to repletion, and now he was quite content to lie down and rest and await their pleasure.

And so at the sound of Theodore's voice, Old Tom raised his head. Both boys were peering timidly round the tree now, uncertain what to attempt next.

"It's Old Tom!" Bobby confirmed Theodore's identification, and both wondered how he came to be there; but they still lacked confidence for any extended conversation. Old Tom chained to his post at Pinehurst and Old Tom loose in Harlow's woods were quite different things. And while fear of immediate attack was gone, they were as anxious as ever to part company with the bear.

"Do you suppose we can sneak away?" Again Theodore was whispering.

"Gee! I dasn't." Bobby's voice shook.

But Old Tom solved the problem for them. With a grunt he got to his feet, walked over and nosed the remaining string of fish, turned it over, sniffed at it, made as though he intended to eat more, and then, turning reluctantly away, walked over to the tree. He was gorged on fish and now craved companionship.

"Face him," whispered Theodore, laying an arresting hand upon Bobby's arm. The boys stood their ground as the bear came round to their side of the tree and, pausing a few feet away, calmly sat on his haunches and watched them.

"Nice Old Tom!" quavered Theodore, but the bear only blinked his beady eyes.

"Let's try walkin' away slow," faltered Bobby.

They had taken a half-dozen uncertain steps when the bear got up and followed.

"Nice Old Tom!" said Theodore again, and then fiercely aside to Bobby: "Don't you bolt! Keep goin' steady and slow." But the nervous strain of calm motion was too much for the boys, and gradually the pace quickened, and again they were plunging through the woods, the bear lumbering along at their heels, and in this order at last they slid and stumbled down the river-bank and out upon the ice.

With the smooth ice under their skates, all their early confidence returned. In their belief that they could skate away from the bear at will, they lost all fear of him and, instead of desiring to leave him, they planned to take him with them. What a sensation they would create walking down Main Street followed by a bear!

"Golly, Theo! We'll take him home with us." Bobby's eyes were shining with delight, all the terror of the past half-hour forgotten. Slowly they skated off, calling to the bear as to a friendly dog, and Old Tom ambled after them. There was no nervous hurrying now. Calling encouragingly, they adapted their pace to what they considered to be the most comfortable gait for the bear, and soon they were skating on either side of him and then each had a hand upon his collar, the bear pulling them forward over the ice.

AND this was the sight that broke upon the gaze of a score or more boys and girls skating above the Main Street bridge.

With shrill cries of amazement the skaters bunched to view this extraordinary sight, and then, as the boys and the bear drew near, they circled round with eager questions.

"Oh, we just caught him up in Harlow's woods," answered Bobby, with vast indifference. There was nothing in his attitude now to indicate that catching bears was not his daily occupation.

"Keep back! Do you want to get bit?" cried Theodore, and the line retreated nervously.

Then Theodore held Old Tom by the collar while Bobby removed his skates, and then, almost bursting with pride, Bobby performed the same feat for Theodore. As the two boys with the bear climbed the river-bank, the skaters were frantically tearing off their skates, and as the boys marched up Main Street with the bear between them, the excited throng followed close behind.

"Let's take him right up past the stores to my house!" cried Bobby, and Theodore agreed. Such an opportunity as this was not to be missed.

But as they turned from Main Street at Bobby's corner, an automobile drew up at the curb, and a man sprang out and pushed through the rapidly gathering crowd.

"Where did you find him?" he cried eagerly. It was one of the keepers from Pinehurst.

"We caught him up in Harlow's woods," said Bobby proudly.

"We saw his tracks across the river and we chased him through Harlow's woods and caught him," supplemented Theodore.

"Well, I'll be darned! You're some boys!" cried the amazed keeper, as he hurriedly buckled a muzzle on the tired bear.

"Oh we ain't afraid of no bears," said Bobby loftily, and the statement was as honestly believed by both boys as the fact that they had finally escorted Old Tom home.

The next story of the "Little Journeys Back Home" series, 'Giants," will appear in November EVERYBODY'S—out October 14th.

Soothing Nervous Nick

A Cure for Disgust at Temperamental Stars, Seventh-Inning Mishaps and So Forth That Should Be Taken Shortly before the Beginning of the 1922 World-Championship Series

By Leonard Hatch

"HEY, Benny! Listen, Benny!"

The dulcet roar of "Bull" Sloper, coaching at third, floated across the diamond to Benny Welch, his fellow coach at first. Theoretically, the remarks were addressed to Benny Welch; actually, they were intended for the edification of "Nervous Nick" Briggs, the opposing pitcher.

"Wot innin' is this Benny? The seventh? I thought so. And say, Benny; I wanta tell yeh li'l secret. It's in th' seventh innin' that somebody—I won't mention no names—but *somebody*—gen'ally goes up in the air."

In our grand-stand seats, Porter Fox and I grimaced sourly at the ironic soundness of these statements. It was all too true. And yet it was the vague hope that to-day it might not be true that had brought us up to the game this afternoon. "Grindstone" McTeague, manager of our Beefeaters, had put in Nervous Nick Briggs to pitch against the Antelopes. His real name was Nicholas but he had earned the sobriquet of "Nervous Nick" because of his proclivity to lose his head and go up in the air toward the end of any game, almost invariably in the seventh inning. And yet he had worlds of natural stuff. But to-day had been no exception to the usual course of events. Nick had been going like a scythe the first six innings, mowing down the Antelopes one after another. As a result, our Beefeaters were three runs to the good and the face of Grindstone McTeague was one huge grin.

But in the seventh inning, Bull Sloper, manager of the Antelopes, who knew Nervous Nick Briggs' weakness well, strode out to the third-base coaching-box and proceeded to "get" him. As has been indicated, his method was to bellow across the diamond ostensibly for the sole delectation of the other coach, but actually to discombobulate the range-finding faculties of our most naturally gifted pitcher.

Bull was at it again.

"Kin yeh hear me, Benny? Wot? Yeh can't? I'll havta tell yeh all over again. Somebody wit' noives kin pitch all right for six innin's. But in the seventh—up he goes! Wa-ay up! Hey? Wot's that? He's due to go up any minute? That's a fact—ain't it?—'t's the seventh right now. Well, he's due to start up any second. Ya-as; 'human elevator' is right. You said a mouthful then, Benny. Noives is a turrible thing—ain't they, Benny? I'll say they are. But don't tell no one I told yeh, Benny. It's a secret." Then, as Nervous Nick Briggs pitched his sixth ball without a strike: "See that, Benny? See that? Keep lookin'! Keep watchin', Benny! There! Wow! Wow! Wow! Yaaa-a-a-ay!"

Even from the grand stand you could almost see poor Nick Briggs struggle with his nervousness. But to no avail. He passed two men, hit a third, and then "Pink" Pettibone cleaned the bases with a three-sacker and scored a minute later on a wild pitch.

And still Bull Sloper jazzed about near third base and howled,

"Noives is a turrible curse to a pitcher; ain't they, Benny?"

Of course, Grindstone yanked poor Nick

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about this time. He was a pitiful sight as he went slinking to the showers while the crowd panned him. One of the relief pitchers held the Antelopes during the eighth and ninth. But the game was gone. The final score was four to three against our Beefeaters.

"It's pretty tough—isn't it?—the way Nick goes all to pieces in the seventh inning time after time," said Porter Fox to me as we edged our way through the crowd after the game. "I'd find some way to cure him of his nerves if I were Grindstone McTeague."

"But you're not," I replied. "You're merely senior partner of the Sensation Shop. Grindstone will have to solve his own problems without your valuable assistance."

AS YOU have observed, Porter Fox and I did not—like many business partners—separate just because our business-hours were over. The truth of the matter is we were friends primarily, partners secondarily, instead of just the reverse, as is so often the case. And we allowed neither our friendship nor our afternoons at the ball park to be interfered with by the fact that we were running the Sensation Shop together.

The Sensation Shop was proving an undeniable success. It was less than five months since we had hired a modest office on the sixth floor of the Cramden Building and painted on the ground glass of our door:

THE SENSATION SHOP

PORTER FOX

PETER WILLARD

Whether it was Porter Fox or I who first thought of the scheme, I've forgotten. But for months we had threshed out its details. At times, the very grotesqueness of it staggered us. Yet instinctively we felt that it was founded on sound premises. Millions scanned the papers every day just to read of some sensation. Of this number, no inconsiderable portion longed to be near one, to have something extraordinary happen in their vicinity. If they could figure in it, could even turn it to their own profit, their interest in such an abnormal or mysterious or astounding happening would be increased tenfold.

"And why," Porter Fox put it shrewdly, "shouldn't we provide these sensations at so much per?"

In that query lay the vital germ which had finally blossomed into the office and the sign on the door.

Things had gone well from the very start. The Sensation Shop was beginning to prove itself an unquestionable success—to us and to those we served. We had passed beyond the experimental stage by now, which made matters much easier for us whenever a client came in to consult us in regard to some marvel or mystery which he needed to make use of in his business. We had things systematized. Porter would work out the plan for the sensation which was to be sprung on an unsuspecting world. I had charge of the exchequer, including all details of estimates and expenditures, and was occasionally vouchsafed the chance to assist Porter in the picturesque staging of the miracle itself. Our business had thriven so that we had been forced to move to a larger office.

And so great was our increase of correspondence that we now had a stenographer, by name Trixie Brierley. She had two special points in her favor: she was more than easy to look at, and she was a great ball fan.

Is it any wonder, then, that the morning after Porter Fox and I had sorrowfully watched Nervous Nick Briggs blow up, Trixie Brierley came bursting into our inner office?

"Oh, Mr. Fox," she cried, "Grindstone McTeague is out here!"

"*Who?*" exclaimed Porter.

"Grindstone McTeague!"

"Show him in."

Before we could even open our mouths to conjecture why the manager of our city's Beefeaters had come to see us, Grindstone McTeague's big bulk was blocking the doorway. He refused a chair, and took a seat on the corner of the desk. At first glance, you would have said he was just a big, good-natured man with a sunburned face, and let it go at that. Yet that was far from summing up Grindstone McTeague. His hair was beginning to turn gray, but there was a whole lot more gray stuff besides hair under his hat. It had yanked the Beefeaters up into first place and was holding them there, though with difficulty.

NEITHER Porter Fox nor I had ever met Grindstone before, but he seemed to know all about us. He didn't waste much time on the usual conversational amenities, didn't try to wait us out, but swung at the first ball pitched.

"I hear that you two are no bushers when it comes to performing miracles at so much per mir." I was about to make some politely modest reply, but he beat my throw to first by a stride. "See the game yesterday?" Then, without waiting for us to sacrifice him along in the conversation, he set sail for second and made it with a daring slide. "Say; didn't Nick smell to heaven?"

Porter was about to make some rejoinder, but Grindstone was digging in his spikes again.

"I want you boys to find some way to knock those damn nerves out of him."

What do you know about that? Grindstone was home—and in less time than it takes most of our clients to pick out the right bat to use.

"You mean—" began Porter.

"I mean," went on Grindstone, "that I want you to cure him of his seventh-inning, schoolgirl hysterics. I've done my best, but the kid's got the notion every time he pitches that the seventh-inning line o' bull they hand him is going to rope his Angora—and it does. Believe me, it's worse still when we are on the road and the whole crowd tunes up at once the way Bull did yest'day. When a whole section of the bleachers begins to tell him he ought to see a nerve-specialist, he gets the shaking palsy. And yet he's no dyed-in-the-wool quitter. He's game enough; it's just his nerves and his superstish about the seventh. And, believe me, that kid's too good a flinger to lose. He's got more real stuff in his wrist than any other twirler of mine has in his whole arm. And he's got the strength to go the through route. But every fan in the whole circuit is onto that seventh-inning bugaboo of his, and they flash it on him till he caves. Get me, do you—you two?"

"Yes; we understand right enough. But what do you want us to do? Hire a thunder-storm to end the game in the sixth inning every time Nick's pitching, or what?"

"No; I'll tell you just what I want." Grindstone thumped his right fist into his left palm. "I want you to make it so much hotter for him that what he's getting handed to him now will seem like one o' his mother's lullabies. I've studied the kid, and I've decided that's the only way. He *thinks* he's suffering now in that seventh inning. But I want you to pull something on him—don't care what it is—that'll make him really ache for a while. Make his seventh inning such a *real* hell for him that when you let up on him and he gets only what he's getting now—a few thousand fans howling, 'Don't get nervous!'—it'll sound to him like a one-handed man trying to bawl him out with the deaf-and-dumb alphabet from the center-field bleachers. Fix it so that when some coach on third tells him to get a drink of bromo-seltzer it won't bother him any more'n to have his best girl tell him how handsome he looks in his ball clothes. See?"

"Well," agreed Porter, "it sounds like pretty good dope to me, but of course he'll be more than likely to lose those games where I'm giving him the third degree."

"What in the name o' Dan Brouthers do you suppose I care for a few games thrown away if I can cure Nervous Nick Briggs of the twitters?" roared Grindstone McTeague. "Ain't we in first place, anyhow, and going pretty sweet? It's in August that the pinch'll come. Right there is where we'll cop the bunting or lose it. Look here, now; Nick's turn to pitch regular will come five times more before we start the next Western trip. I'm willing to count those five games up as lost if you can use 'em to fix up Nick so that when we go West he'll be able to last his games out—seventh inning and all."

About this time Grindstone may have seen me putting on my professional treasurer's look, for he went on,

"What's more, the first game he lasts through and wins, you shall have a sum equal to the gate that day."

Porter suddenly straightened up with a snap.

"Well, Mr. McTeague, I'll make no promises, but I'm game to take a shot at Nervous Nick because I believe he's got the stuff underneath his nerves and because

I want to see you land the pennant. I'll do my best."

" 'Atta boy!"

Porter continued seriously:

"But if I take this on, I'll have to be able to have my orders—no matter how strange they may seem—obeyed the days Nick Briggs is pitching. And you'll have to tell the rest of the team to put up with some queer doings."

"Sure thing! I'll fix that all right. Dynamite the grand stands if you want to." He slid off the desk. "But I've got to beat it."

After his departure, Porter sat silent for a long time. Then he looked up with a jerk.

"I was just thinking of his remark about the dynamite," said he. "But there must be something not quite so strong which will do just as well."

"What's in the wind?" I asked eagerly.

"A three-ring circus, you incorrigible question-mark," said Porter, laughing "with Nervous Nick as chief clown!"

BEFORE the Beefeaters started on their next Western trip they were to play series with five other teams—the Hornets, the Rips, the Cupids, the Goobers, the Blue Jays.

The morning of the day Nervous Nick Briggs was due to go against the Hornets, I happened to be late in getting to the office. I found a much-tanned young man talking to Porter. Evidently they were just terminating a long chat, to judge from the incomprehensibility of the details that drifted over to me as I opened my mail.

"Are you able to use field-glasses?" asked Porter.

"Certainly."

"Watch for a white flag from behind the grand stand. That's the only place I can have it where the crowd can't see. Think you can pick it out?

"Easy." He was a laconic young man.

"I certainly hope so," went on Porter. "I'll wave you a preliminary signal about three minutes before I want you, and then I'll wave continuously."

"I'll be on the lookout, all right."

"Please see that you are," urged Porter. "And get round as quick as you can."

"The very steepest I dare," answered the young man.

"And for the love of the Beefeaters, speak distinctly," begged my partner.

"I will, if I don't go and laugh," the stranger replied, getting up to leave. And at his thoughts, his face was one broad grin.

"What's doing, Porter?" I asked, when we were alone.

"I'll tell you if you won't ask me any more questions." said he.

"Agreed."

"Well," he said, "the answer is that I was arranging for a pleasant seventh inning this afternoon." And he relapsed into a silent chuckle at the way he had double-crossed me.

I was sore for a second. Then I laughed.

"You know, Porter," I said, "that same trick was worked better by the man with one leg. His acquaintances made his life a hell with questions about how he'd lost the other leg. One day he called 'em all together and said, 'I'll tell you how I lost my leg, provided you'll promise never to ask me a single question more about it.' They promised, of course. And then he said, '*'Twas bitten off.*' I get just the same amount of satisfaction when I ask you questions."

Porter laughed and said:

"The game's called at three-thirty. That's not long to wait."

And with this brief passage at arms, we settled down to work.

That was certainly one fine day for a ball game—warm, but not oppressive, in spite of the fact that there was little wind. And, what's more, the game was worthy of the weather. "Sailor" Brady was in the box for the Hornets, and he and Nick Briggs were making such a close thing of it that they ought to have held the attention of any bunch of bugs.

I say "ought," for they weren't holding all the crowd to-day.

There was a counter-attraction. An aeroplane had been buzzing about overhead, never lower than eight or nine hundred feet, but that is enough to keep a crowd rubbering. However, as the fourth and fifth innings went by, the air-man worked higher and higher until he became such a tiny speck that the fans focused their whole attention on the game once more. And it was worth it, for neither pitcher had been scored on.

And yet—the seventh inning was coming, and you could see that the Hornets were well aware of that fact and priming themselves for it.

But Nervous Nick Briggs wouldn't have worried about any regular routine panning if he had had an inkling of what was really ahead of him.

When the sixth inning was nearing its close, Porter Fox went to the back of the grand stand and signaled down to a youth who was loitering there. Instantly the boy began to wave a white flag furiously back and forth for a minute. He paused. Then, just as Nick Briggs strode out to the box for the beginning of the seventh inning, the boy with the flag began to wave it again. Porter came back to his seat beside me. And we settled down to watch Nick.

THE hostile members of the crowd—they always exist, even at home—began to open fire on Nick. And he, according to formula, proceeded to lose his spine and pitch two balls to every strike—a procedure which may serve to make an excellent example in Greenleaf's Arithmetic, but will never do on the diamond. I expected to hear the crowd grow more and more vociferous in its pleas to Grindstone to pull him out. Instead, they were growing quieter, and then actually inattentive. Uplifted faces and pointing arms soon gave me the clue. The aeroplane was coming down. It had started a magnificient swoop, apparently straight toward the diamond. Now you could begin to distinguish its outlines; now it became possible to pick out the figure operating it. Apparently it was headed straight toward the center of the diamond and the pitcher's box. Now it was possible to see that the air-man was wearing a coxswain's little megaphone strapped in place over his mouth. Now Nick Briggs caught sight of the aeroplane and stopped in the act of pitching.

With one final swoop, the aeroplane dashed downward, straight at Nick. And Nick did precisely what you or I—esteemed reader—would have done—ducked and flung himself flat on the ground. Then, in a beautiful curve, the aeroplane shot square over the pitcher's box, not twenty-five feet above the ground.

As it did so, the air-man, in a voice of such distinctness that it carried through the entire grand stand, cried:

"Seventh inning, isn't it, Nick? Come on up!"

With that he elevated his planes, started his motor again and began to soar in the direction of right field.

Have you ever heard four thousand people all laugh together? No? Well, you'd have heard just that if you'd been in the grand stand that day. Four-thousand-lung-power laughter can't be a very enjoyable sound—if you're the goat. I glanced at the Hornets' bench. Every man Jack of 'em was lying twisted up in a bowknot, as if from sort of instantaneous colic. And our Beefeaters were almost as badly off. You can't resist the irresistible, even when it's a friend of yours that the joke's on.

As the aeroplane shot away, Nick Briggs sprang to his feet. He drew back his arm, and I thought he was going to hurl the ball at the air-man. Instead, he faced the plate and pitched to the man at bat, even in his wild rage subconsciously hoping to sneak a strike across on him. But the batter was not caught napping. He landed squarely on the sphere and sent an exceptionally lofty fly in the direction of right field.

And now occurred the impossible—such a monstrosity as couldn't be duplicated in a million years. Fifty Sensation Shops couldn't have contrived anything so perfect. For the ball completed its upward parabola and started downward just as the air-man shot beneath. Like a flash he wrenched the megaphone from his lips and deftly caught the ball in it! It was the kind of freak you wouldn't believe if you hadn't seen it yourself.

Both teams swarmed about the umpire. But the Hornets got the decision, for the umpire sent the batter down to first, ruling that the fly had neither been a foul nor been caught by any fielder. When Grindstone prolonged his protests, Umps turned on him with:

"Ye kick at a single, whin I might 'a' called it a home run—hit going outside the grounds. Ye ongrateful cuss!"

Most of the sages who compose critical treatises on baseball technicalities have averred that the umpire was right, inasmuch as the aeroplanist had not taken the place of the right fielder and was not wearing a ball suit. Others go still further, calling it a home run, because the ball went over the fence without having touched the ground. And some—on the other side—say the batter should have been called out, as the fly was one which the right-fielder would have caught ninety-nine times out of a hundred.

You'll have to make up your own mind on the really proper ruling. I can't inform you.

But I *can* inform you that Nick Briggs accepted the air-man's invitation to go up. In fact, he went even higher than the aeroplane. And Grindstone McTeague wouldn't pull him out.

Before the Hornets were retired they had made six runs, more than half of them by the stroll-around route. Nervous Nick Briggs had received his first baptism of fire from the Sensation Shop.

ON THE fourth day after this, I got into the office to find Porter Fox telephoning to some one. As I entered, he was just saying into the mouthpiece:

"Lay off one of your own private cops for the afternoon and my man'll take his place. . . . Much obliged, Mr. McTeague. . . . No; nothing so hectic as the other day. Just a little mild wheeze. Good-by."

That afternoon was cloudy, but nevertheless there was a good crowd at the ball-grounds, perhaps attracted by the desire to discourse humorously to Nervous Nick Briggs, who was to pitch again. They did not hold that desire in check until the seventh inning, either. Almost every time Nick would fail to locate the plate, some alleged wag in the bleachers would bawl:

"Hi! You're ahead of your schedule. Save those for the seventh," or "James, fetch the aeroplane for Mr. Briggs."

But the fans weren't getting much chance to knock, for Nick was going well. The score was three to two against the Rips at the end of the sixth inning. Close as the score was, nevertheless there were not a great many thrills in the game, and my eyes wandered away from the diamond at times. In the pause just after the sixth inning, I observed a special policeman standing near one of the players' benches. I noticed him partly because his was a new face to me, but still more because he was such a husky.

I gave Porter the elbow.

"See that new special cop—whale, isn't he?"

But my friend merely grunted. He didn't appear much interested. And I turned my attention to the game again.

Nick Briggs hunched his shoulders and took up his seventh-inning duties while his critics redoubled their references to sky-craft. Whether he would have passed the first man or not will never be known, for on the first ball pitched that batter knocked a sizzler along the third-base line. Only a marvelous stop and throw by third beat the runner to first.

"Hey, Grindstone, they got his number! Take him out!" yelled four hundred and forty-seven fans at once.

I don't know whether or not this rattled Nick or whether he was already in the grip of his seventh-inning flurry, but, anyway, he made a wild pitch. The ball just touched the catcher's mitt and was deflected so that it rolled to the feet of the special policeman.

Porter Fox rarely rooted uproariously at the games. Therefore I was the more surprised to hear him suddenly yell, close beside my ear:

"Hey, Nick; stop trying to throw the ball away! Don't be so strong!"

The special cop had picked up the ball at his feet. With a grin he made as if to tuck it into an inside pocket. Then he drew his hand out again and rolled the ball back along the ground to Nick's box.

Nick stooped and picked it up. Something about the slow way he straightened himself up made me watch him more closely. I saw him turn a fiery red even through his mid-season tan, though whether from embarrassment or rage I don't know. He turned toward where the special cop had been standing, but that individual had disappeared. Nick did not move. His face grew blacker. A fan yelled: "Hurry up! We want our supper." But still Nick made no motion to pitch, just stood there holding the ball in both hands in a curious attitude wholly unlike his stereotyped one.

Beside me, Porter chuckled.

Then, his face still crimson, Nervous Nick left his box and walked slowly toward the plate. The umpire, surprised, stepped forward to see what was wrong. Without a word Nick handed the ball he carried to the umpire. As he took it, that dignitary's hand was forced down as if some one had handed him a half-dozen bricks.

His Umpship broke down completely. Actually, you could see his sides shake with his laughter. So overcome was he that he didn't prevent the waiting Rip batter—who saw something was queer about the ball—from getting hold of it. With a yell of delight, he dropped it. It fell on home plate with the proverbial dull, sickening thud.

The Rip batter turned toward his mates on the bench.

"Lead!" he shrieked in unholy glee. In a second, every one was on.

As the umpire straightened his face and gave Nick a new ball, the crowd cut loose with a volley:

"Let him keep the other one!"

"Sure! He needs ballast."

"Put a ball and chain on him!"

"Let him carry a sand-bag!"

"Tie him down with guy-ropes!"

"He needs 'em all right!"

And he did. Nervous Nick went up higher than he had the day before. During that inning, the Sensation Shop made seven runs, though the official scorer put them down to the credit of the jubilant Rips.

I WAS not much surprised, on coming to the office a few mornings later, to find Porter Fox in deep consultation with two men. By their manner and the bits of talk I caught, I judged them to be mechanics or electricians or something of that sort.

"How long did it take you?" Porter was asking.

"The whole blessed night," answered the taller of the two men. "The darkness hindered the gang. It was sunrise when we finished."

"How did she work finally?" questioned my chief.

"Smooth as silk. You press the button; gravity does the rest."

"And did you follow my orders about the mattresses?"

"Yes, sir. Got the softest ones made. Lined it up like the inside of a silk hat."

"Good! How does it look on top?"

"Same as always," replied one of the strangers. "A little loose dirt fixed that all right."

"What did the ground-keeper have to say?" asked Porter.

"Said we were undoing his season's work. Raved round like a crazy man."

"I'll say he did," went on the other. "We had to show him McTeague's written orders a dozen times if we did once. And at that he said he thought Grindstone had gone off his nut."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you for taking so much pains with this job. If you don't leak, I'll most likely have another for you the end of this week."

"Mum is our middle name, sir," said one of the men. And they started for the door.

"Wait," said Porter. "You'll find cigars there in the box on the mantel, along with something else you may be able to use in your business."

The "something else" proved to be a couple of yellow-backs. And the men went out, salaaming gratefully.

"Another surprise-party for Nervous Nick Briggs on the bill for to-day?" I queried.

"You have surprised me secret, Dr. Watson," replied Porter.

Our Beefeaters were up against the Cupids that afternoon. The origin of their name is self-evident, for you couldn't have rounded up a harder-looking bunch if you'd had your pick of the city's longshoremen.

And—great Jericho—how they could whale the ball! Most any one of them made no more of slamming out a two-sacker than you would of signing your name. There weren't three pitchers in the league that could mesmerize 'em consistently.

Therefore it is not at all strange that Nervous Nick Briggs was unable to hold them down that afternoon. They had piled up eight runs in the first six innings. But our boys had stayed with 'em to the tune of another eight. The two teams swung into the seventh lap neck and neck.

There was a big crowd on hand, attracted partly by the slugging powers of the Cupids and partly by the farce-comedy of the last two games Nervous Nick had pitched. After Porter Fox and I had taken our regular seats, I noticed him fumbling with an inconspicuous little push-button bulb from which a wire led down out of sight under his seat. It was like the contrivance which the stereopticon lecturer holds and presses when he wants to set the bluebottle in the lantern buzzing for a fresh slide.

Porter saw me looking toward the wire as he held it concealed under the straw hat in his lap. And I saw his eye twinkle as he thought how he wouldn't answer my questions about it. But I talked about the weather instead. That's the time I fooled him. He wasn't going to pull his cheap "Dr. Watson" stuff on me *all* the time!

The head of the Cupids' batting list led off at the beginning of the seventh inning. It was evident that to-day Nick had his fighting blood up and was going to struggle desperately for control. Nevertheless, to achieve that, he'd got to groove the ball more or less. And you know what that means against the Cupids. But Nick was successful in getting two strikes on this first man.

Then the batter leaned against a straight one and sent the old apple cleanly into the right center.

The next man knocked a stinger straight at Nick. No pitcher alive could have handled it. And Nick didn't. Though he held the foremost base-runner to second.

Number three at bat. On the first ball pitched, he crashed a line-drive, like a rifle-bullet, straight at Nick's head. Nick had just time to duck; it was all any man could have done. The ball kept on into center, and the runner from second breezed home. That put the Cupids a run to the good.

The last two hits had been driven directly at Nick. Fate was playing straight into Porter Fox's hands that afternoon. I've always said he was the luckiest soul that breathed.

Two men still on the sacks and "Killer" Donovan at bat! He had led the league with the stick the year before. That's all. He came nonchalantly out to the plate, flung away two extra baseball bats and kept a young telegraph-pole. Porter Fox leaned forward and reached a hand under the straw hat in his lap.

Nick put a strike across to start with. Then he pitched two balls. Killer fouled off the next. And Nick gave him another ball. Three and two on him; only the big one left. The crowd was silent and breathless.

Nick straightened up. At this instant, Porter yelled at the very top of his voice—so loud that thousands heard him,

"Say, Nick; better get into the cyclone-cellar before he knocks your block off!"

Nick nodded. He was only nodding a signal O. K. to the catcher, but every newspaper in town next day declared he nodded in the direction of Porter's voice. He wound up and let go the ball. It was several inches wide of the rubber, and Donovan walked. But that is only a trivial detail.

Nervous Nick Briggs had disappeared!

Gone! Blotted out! Vanished into thin air! That diamond was without a pitcher. Where the pitcher's box had been yawned a hole six feet long. And from that cavity suddenly protruded the shoulders and livid face of Nervous Nick. The crowd—with Porter's jeering shout still echoing in their ears—absolutely shrieked. This might not be baseball, but it had baseball beaten by several kilometers.

To-day's umpire had no sense of humor, like his predecessor in the lead-ball incident. He took one look at the hole in the diamond and called the game. I've forgotten whether the game was credited to the Cupids or whether it was played off later. But I know it's a darned good thing it was called. Nick Briggs would have killed some one if he could. He was just ripe for it. I have a notion that, had the game gone on, he'd have beaned every Cupid that faced him. And if he'd known who it was that advised the cyclone-cellar and was at that instant dropping an electric push-button under his seat, well—my guess is that that six-foot hole would have had a permanent occupant.

Porter's voice was at my ear.

"You see," it breathed, "trap-doors have other uses than hangings and Christmas pantomimes."

"Still, it seems pretty rough stuff to use on the poor kid," I remonstrated.

"Right-o! It *is* heroic treatment, like killing nerves at the dentist's. But it's our job to make a nine-inning pitcher of him, and we'll do it yet."

BELIEVE me, the papers next morning buzzed. "Who did it?" "Were the Cupids responsible?" "Would the president of the league have an investigation?" And so on, with ever-varying theories.

But on one thing all the scribes agreed: It was the funniest event that ever had been or would be seen on a ball-diamond. Proving conclusively that the sporting writers little dreamed of the resourcefulness of one Porter Fox.

The Goobers were the next foreign invaders. They stood near the bottom of the second division, and the Beefeaters had won all three games before the day came when Nervous Nick was due to pitch. The newspapers had been pouring out copy about the mysterious jinx which was persuing Nick Briggs and cutting loose on him in the seventh inning with stunts which had never been seen on any ball-field. There were theories galore, but no one really wanted the mystery solved just then; it was too much fun. You can't get a ball game and a circus every day in the week for one admission. And the crowd appreciated that fact. The stands were packed when the game was called. And Porter Fox and I were among those present.

I HADN'T been down to the office that morning at all, so I didn't know whether Porter had been having his regular conferences with mysterious strangers or not. But I judged he had, for I caught sight of a bit of wire curling away under his seat, though a person who was not looking for it would never have noticed it, so well was it concealed.

"Going to repeat on him, I see," I remarked to Porter. "You'll try that trapdoor stunt once too often and break his leg. And then where'll you be?"

"You'd make one grand preacher, Peter," said my friend. "Pity you didn't go in for that."

There was great interest in the crowd to see if Grindstone would actually send Nick in to pitch after his last three unfortunate starts. But when the game began, there he was in the box. And full of confidence—to all appearances. Grindstone was right. There wasn't a trace of real yellowness in the lad—only nerves. And the Sensation Shop was doing the best it could to deaden these by the process of cauterization.

The Goobers had a team batting-average forty-three points below the Cupids, and for six innings Nervous Nick had them beating the air round the plate into a froth in their efforts to connect. Meanwhile, the Beefeaters had hung up five runs.

At the beginning of the seventh inning, the umpire, who took himself with tremendous seriousness, went out to the pitcher's box and examined it carefully, stamping vigorously to make sure it concealed no trap-door to-day. Needless to say, the crowd barked rapturously. The umpire, satisfied at last, went back to his post, and Nick, evidently reassured, took up his seventh-inning task.

But—I noticed Porter Fox's hand stealing down under the straw hat in his lap.

Eddie Harrison was the first of the Goobers at bat in this inning. He'd struck out twice previously. But now he surprised everybody, himself included, by knocking a little roller down toward first base. The Beefeater's first baseman of course ran to take the hit, while Nick went racing across to cover the bag for the putout. The first baseman gathered the grounder cleanly and tossed the ball to Nick. Nick caught it on the run and jumped for the bag. There was miles of time. Eddie Harrison still had five feet to go, and that's a lot when the other man is a yard nearer first. Nick thrust his foot out to plant it on first, when——

Pouf! Bang! There was no first!

A little puff of blue smoke went floating off in to right field. Some dirty canvas ribbons lay on the grass ten feet away. And Nick's outstretched foot came down on bare ground.

Eddie Harrison was no great ball-player. But now he did the one correct thing. Before Nick recovered enough to tag him out, Harrison had flung himself on the ground and clutched the staple to which first base had been attached.

When the crowd awoke enough to realize that some explosive inside first base had blown it cleanly into shreds just when Nick needed it most, it got up on its hind legs and pawed the air with delight. Not that it really had anything against Nick, but this was too good not to appreciate. The players of both teams rushed up to discuss the play, though the Goobers were too near hysterics to present any effective argument. I don't blame them; the crowd was in the same condition.

Meanwhile, the two umpires put their heads together. Nick had *not* touched the bag and had *not* touched the runner; whereas Eddie Harrison had grasped the staple which had held the erstwhile sack. There was only one decision to render. Eddie was safe.

At this ruling, Grindstone rushed from the bench and gave his famous imitation of Henry Irving in "The Bells." But in vain. I saw Nick look pleadingly at his boss, but as Grindstone would not take him out, he had to go back to his box.

Meanwhile, a fresh base had been fetched out and strapped down at the first corner. Nick faced the next batter. That individual had his instructions. He never even raised his bat until there were three balls and two strikes on him.

But that batter wasn't worrying. In fact, he yelled cheerfully at Nick:

"Look out, boy! I hear there's a half-ton o' T N T planted right under where you're standin'!" Still, Nervous Nick hadn't cracked yet. He was perfectly well aware that this was the time to beat his jinx by putting a third strike across. He wound up deliberately. But just as the ball left his hand——

Shu-u-ush!

With a muffled roar like a firecracker under a tin pan, the home plate suddenly shot up twenty feet into the air.

Nervous Nick Briggs was the first and only pitcher who had ever put the ball squarely under the plate!

The Sensation Shop's corps of sappers and miners had certainly done their work well.

The umpire would have called the game except for the fact that he was firmly convinced that the whole business was designed for the express purpose of tempting him to call it. So he looked as wise as any man can look when surrounded by a couple of thousand folks in a state of aggravated hysterics. As he saw it, the ruling was clear. To be called a strike, a pitched ball must cross the plate. But how can it cross the plate when there *is* no plate? Yet it must have been either a strike or a ball. Therefore, as it was not a strike, it must have been a ball. *Q. E. D.*

He let the batter walk.

The plate was hammered down into place again. Meanwhile, frenzied fans begged for an elephant, pink lemonade, and a steam calliope, and implored Nervous Nick to wear his clown's costume at the next game. They also reiterated the Goober's jest that there was a half-ton of explosive planted under the pitcher's box.

The only other thing of importance that happened to Nick Briggs that day was that he lost the game.

THAT evening, Porter Fox had a long conversation over the telephone with Grindstone McTeague. And later in the evening McTeague sent out a statement to the newspapers to the effect that he had not lost faith in Nick Briggs and that he would continue to use him.

Next day the Blue Jays came to town for four games before the Beefeaters started their Western trip, which they were to open against the Cupids. But the sporting writers still continued to focus all their attention on Nervous Nick Briggs and the astounding phenomena that attended every game he pitched.

There were as many theories as there were sporting writers. But on the morning of the game which Nick was booked to pitch against the Blue Jays, a queer thing occurred. Each and every paper in town contained the hint—only vaguely expressed—that Nervous Nick might that day have some special coaching to steady him during the time that he was in the box. I can't tell you for a fact why this should occur simultaneously to so many sporting experts. All I know definitely is that Porter Fox had spent a good portion of the previous evening telephoning.

The morning of the game, Porter devoted a great amount of time to Trixie Brierley, our stenographer. To be sure, it was nothing new. Trixie Brierley was an uncommonly pretty girl, with stunning hair, a provokingly captivating little face and infinite self-assurance. Nothing feezed her. But Porter was girl-proof—as the world goes—and I had often wondered why he should devote any special attention to Trixie. That is, I had wondered until one day I heard them discussing baseball together. Then I understood. Trixie was a white-hot fan, and gloried in it. And I came to realize—with some relief—that Porter found her interesting chiefly as a fellow fan, and a mighty intelligent one. Trixie had been to all the freak games in which Nervous Nick Briggs had recently figured. But if she had any thoughts about them, she kept them under her tip-tilted little hat. Arrant fan though she was, she realized that business is business. I'll say she did.

As I was remarking when I stopped to sketch Trixie Brierley, on this morning Porter talked a long time with her. He seemed to be instructing her in something she had to perform.

"Where did you say?" asked Trixie.

"A box," replied Porter. "All by yourself. I'll give you the tickets after lunch."

"Can't I—can't I please wear a veil?"

Porter shook his head inexorably.

"Nothing to that," said he. "It would gum the whole show. And, what's more, I want you to doll yourself up your prettiest."

She sighed resignedly.

"If I'm to take it on at all, I s'pose I may as well make an A 1 job of it."

"Good girl!" said Porter. "And you sha'n't suffer by it. I'm going to have a talk with Treasurer Peter Willard, the big gloom sitting there in the corner, and I'll mention you."

"Much obliged," said Trixie. "I'll do my best."

"That's right. Be game." And Porter smiled encouragingly at her. "And don't forget—you're doing it all for the sake of the Beefeaters."

And their talk ended.

WHAT a mob there was at the ball park that afternoon! It was the last game before the Beefeaters took the road. But that wasn't all that had drawn the crowd. No; it was the fact that Nervous Nick Briggs was slated to do the twirling. Moreover, the cryptic allusions in the morning papers to special coaching had piqued the curiosity of many—including luckless Nick Briggs himself.

As Nick walked out to his box for the get-away inning, the crowd gave a big yell, mostly encouraging. As the yell subsided into quietness, a girl sprang to her feet and waved a foolish-looking little flag. In a shrill but distinct voice she piped:

"Come on now! Hang it on 'em, Nicky boy!"

A large proportion of the crowd heard and came across with the big ha-ha, partly at her, partly at Nick. I stared at the girl. Something about the set of her shoulders and the tilt of her head looked strangely familiar to me. Suddenly I knew.

"My Lord!" I cried, nudging Porter. "It's Trixie!"

"None other," replied Porter dryly.

The lead-off batter faced Nick.

"Now get the first one, kid!" shrilled Trixie. And the crowd laughed again.

Nick heard all right. But it didn't help him to get the first one or the next or the next. In fact, the Blue Jays got three runs—presents right from Trixie—that first inning.

Nick settled down a bit after that, but Trixie didn't. Not on your life! She kept up a steady fusillade of clear-voiced advice, timing her remarks to fit in at some quiet moment. She certainly was game. It didn't take the crowd long to get on. In fact, after a while it got so that each time she would spring to her feet, leaning out over her box and waggling that fool flag about, everybody would shut up so as to give themselves—and Nick—a chance to hear. And Nick was hearing all right, though he put up a feeble bluff that he wasn't.

She had the lingo down cold, and handed out good counsel whenever a fresh batter faced Nick. It was:

"Hey, Nick; here's easy picking!"

"Feed him a fast one, boy!"

"Wake up! Use the corners!"

"Wind one round his neck, kid!"

"Try him with your spitter!"

"Steady there! Make him hit it!"

"Don't let him crowd the plate that way! Bean him if he does!"

"Come on, Nicky; 'atta boy!"

And she had the crowd right with her. After each remark of hers, the grand stand howled its approval and amusement, the sentimental-minded scenting a romance. Nick knew very well what they thought; that's what galled him.

If this had been one isolated event, it might have worked as a tonic on Nervous Nick. But coming after his grilling of the preceding four games, it had a very different effect. By the end of the sixth inning, Nick had been reduced to a pulp. He was one perpetual wabble. And the Blue Jays piled up nine runs, largely by walking. But still Grindstone didn't yank him—merely sat grim and immobile in the dugout.

By the beginning of the seventh inning, Nick was just about all in as to nerves. And there wasn't a darn thing he could do.

If Trixie had been a man, Nick might have appealed to the umpire. But as it was—No; there was simply nothing to do but plug along with the dreary grind.

Nick passed the first man up in the fateful seventh. He passed the second. Then the watching crowd saw Trixie suddenly spring to her feet and beckon violently. Instantly a little district messenger-boy darted out from under the grand stand and raced over to Trixie's box. She whipped out a pad of paper and a pencil and scribbled something. She tore off the paper, folded it quickly, handed it to the waiting boy and gave him a little push. Like a flash he darted out into the diamond before any one could stop him and held out the note to Nick. And the poor devil was just that badly fussed that he took the note before he knew what he was doing. The messenger promptly vamosed. And before he came to himself, Nick actually started to read the note.

Trixie told me afterward that what she had written was: "Why not try throwing the ball somewhere near the plate for a change?" Not so frightfully cheering to read when you couldn't locate the plate if it were the size of a wash-tub!

If this, instead of being the chronicle of an athlete having his nerves treated by the talented personnel of the Sensation Shop, were a baseball story of the sort which accomplished authors write for the magazines, you would now behold Nervous Nick Briggs taking a deep breath, hitching up his belt and striking out the next three men. And you would doubtless have an ending filled with Trixie and wedding-bells. Whereas, in reality, I suppose that to this day Nick hates that girl worse than any other skirt on earth.

And what he actually did was to pass the next batter with four pitched balls. The bases were filled. Still, Grindstone McTeague made no move.

Nick wasn't laying down. Don't think that. Nevertheless, try as he would, the next thing Nick did was to make a perfect wild pitch, which the catcher could only deflect. The ball rolled over near the box where Trixie was sitting, and a run came in.

Then it was that the crowd got its grand-finale sensation. As the ball stopped on the grass in front of her, Trixie lightly vaulted over the low railing and picked it up. Before the thunderstruck catcher or umpire could make any move, she walked across the diamond to the pitcher's box and thrust the ball into Nick's hands with the well-known come-on-old-man-you-can-do-it-for-God-sake-buck-up-and play-ball manner which every catcher uses to steady his pitcher.

It was a picture as the two faced each other. Nick was white to the lips. In all his life he had never been made such a fool of. If it had been a man, he would have drawn off then and there and handed him a wallop. But it was a girl—and a mighty pretty one. There wasn't a thing on earth he could do, and he knew it. He just stood still and trembled. It was evident enough that he thought she was going to stroke his fevered brow or kiss him or something.

Folks say Grindstone McTeague has no heart. But I think differently. He was the only person in the ball park except Nick who wasn't laughing. Besides, he was a shrewd old bird, and he knew when his man had had enough. He held up a finger and pulled Nick out of the game.

Meanwhile, Trixie Brierley calmly walked back and disappeared beneath the grand stand. A couple of minutes later she took her seat nonchalantly in her box. Another pitcher took Nick's place and finished the lost contest.

Porter Fox was pretty solemn as he walked away with me after the game.

"Peter," said he, "I'm glad that business is over. I wouldn't have taken it on if I hadn't honestly believed it would be for the Beefeaters' good in the end. I've followed Grindstone's orders. And if I haven't made that poor kid's last five games a hell on earth for him, it's not because I haven't tried. After this, nothing the crowd can hand him ought to bother him."

THE Beefeaters went on the road, to meet the slugging Cupids first of all.

Near the end of one afternoon, four days later, the Sensation Shop received the following telegram:

Cupidville.

At the ringside. Nervous Nick pitching. It's the end of the seventh. Of course the crowd opened on him with the regular seventh-inning holler. But the kid just turned round and laughed at them, and struck out three men with twelve pitched balls. GRINDSTONE.

A Novelette Complete in This Issue

Amidon's Island

An Interesting Triangle—the Father, the Daughter about Whom He Built a Wall, and the Man. Laid, Too, in an Interesting Environment—the Tropics—Which Take from Some All That Is Decent, Brings Out in Others All That Is Natural and True

By Paul Annixter

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

WHEN Mark Enderby, the American, told Monsieur Daban, the French agent of the Paumotan Group, that he would remain in the archipelago only a fortnight, and would be going back north as soon as he located his friend Amidon, the agent merely smiled.

"We shall see, *monsieur;* we shall see. But if you do, you will be the first. A Frenchman or an Englishman may come and go, but with you Americans it is different. I have seen them come for twenty years, but always if they are not gone before a fortnight is up they stay on, and you will see them going about brown as the natives, or hear of a new plantation taken over on shares. Ah, yes, *monsieur;* for this is Polynesia, the original Eden, where time ceases to exist, as your great Stevenson himself put it."

Enderby had laughed tolerantly.

"It may be true," he said, "but as for me, I can go a lot short on this lotus thing. There's beauty down here—it beats anything I ever saw; but I'm a busy man."

To which Daban had smiled his peculiarly satisfied and irritating smile. With the help of his assistant, a man from Martinique, he had done all that was possible to vouch for his statement. Enderby was a stranger from the Outside, and for a time, of course, he must be Daban's guest. Tropic etiquette demanded it. Enderby, lean, intense, and dynamic with the purpose which had brought him across five thousand miles of the world's bulge, had been for pushing on toward Amidon's island that night, but the mere suggestion had brought a torrent of protest from his host. He would not even let him broach his plans until late the second day.

It had been astonishingly easy to wait, however, after the first few hours, and Enderby, who had never known rest, was beginning to feel the innermost recesses of his being expanding and stretching.

Daban proved an admirable host. He and his assistant were easy-going hedonists who took life as it came and had no more truck with worries or morals than the natives themselves. They plied him with drinks and the choicest in tobacco, but, in manners profuse with courtesy, refused all information regarding Amidon and his island.

Here was a land beyond the ordinary pale of extradition, and by the second day Enderby had no doubt in his mind as to the prevalence of some island custom which curtailed all gratuitous information to strangers from the outer world. In subtle ways he found himself being sounded, and it was no small achievement for him to get a laugh on it. By nature he had always been curt and direct, abrupt in decision as he was quick in action. He was wise enough, however, to see that on this trip he had a different set of conditions to deal with. What piqued him most was the sense that his quarry possibly knew already of his presence, while he himself was under espionage. He upbraided himself for having shown his hand at the outset, but entered into the game of dissimulation with a quiet laugh.

By the second day he admitted to himself, with a wry grin, that he was really extracting a modicum of joy from this game of tact. Tropic towns were not unknown to him, and Aribibu, the consular town of Fakarava, was no exception to the general run. The natives, as is the usual thing, were not to be trusted where a matter of secrecy depended. Enderby dragged the native quarter methodically, and the second night unearthed the inevitable appendage to every island port, a white beach-comber by the name of Daggett, a tricky bit of flotsam, drifted, God knows how, from London. In Daggett he had material that was putty to his touch. Moreover, Daggett needed everything from rum to dungarees, and for the wherewithal was keen enough to keep a tight mouth. After being closeted two hours with Enderby in the water-front pub, Daggett astonished the quarter by appearing arrayed in white man's clothing for the first time in five years. He had likewise acquired a glorious bun.

Early the following morning, Enderby announced to his host that he would be out the better part of the day on a hike up the shore. He set off immediately after breakfast, arrayed in helmet and mosquito-boots, carrying nothing but a small automatic. The morning was one of pristine brilliance, and Enderby, inhaling one of Daban's choice cheroots with which he had filled his pockets, took off his helmet as he strode down the yellow strand. Early morning was swimming-time, and out from shore, in the gently lifting mist, native boats full of boisterous youths and girls bobbed on the heaving swells. A score of them were disporting in the water with joyous cries, their bronze bodies gleaming in the sun like a school of playing dolphins. Enderby had an unprecedented impulse to fling off his own clothes and run in that warm sunlight.

Along the jungle-edge, magic vistas opened at intervals for his eyes, and the warm vegetal breath of the bush was like something that laid fingers upon the strings of his heart, full of subtle and unknown allurements. Gaudy birds clamored in the leafy arbors, and the blue-black wall of fecundity was shot with splashes of color from a score of unknown blooms. Enderby sighed deeply.

"Daban is right," he murmured. "These must be the fabled Hesperides. Time, as we know it back in the world, has no place or meaning here. Some day I shall come back here and rest a while."

IN A little cove which connected with the big lagoon in the interior of the island by a miniature tributary, Enderby found Daggett waiting. Daggett knew which side his bread was buttered on. No vestige of the glorious souse of the preceding night was visible now. Likewise, the white man's mufti had given place to the disreputable dungarees. Daggett was ready for business.

A bit later, Enderby was being sculled down-shore in a flimsy native catamaran which Daggett had surreptitiously bartered for the previous day. It consisted of a frail skiff, joined to a hollow float by means of a plank, and while it could not entirely sink, it seemed to have been constructed so that each wave might douse the occupant with a slither of salt spray. A mile out from shore, Enderby began to get an idea of what he would shortly be up against. The islands hereabouts were in plain sight of one another, most of them minute coral rings, less than a mile in circumference. The majority of them were practically owned and controlled by the planters who had settled on them, so that each was a little monarchy by itself.

The island Roger Amidon had chosen for his little kingdom reared its head to the south about an hour before midday. Daggett had been there before Amidon's coming. Unlike the neighboring islands, which were mere low-lying atolls, it rose high out of the water, and, because of its peculiar contour, had been named by the natives the "Flower Basket" in the old days. Enderby marveled at its resemblance to a tall basket, floating dreamlike upon the tranquil blue of the sea. Its shores rose with formidable abruptness, a deep black-green except where the gray of basalt rock stood forth, with hardly a beach beneath.

"Some little fortress," he muttered, and in his mind was a picture of Roger Amidon, proud, fierce, uncompromising, fleeing from one outpost to another until he had chanced at last upon this farthest-flung pin-point on the Southern ocean. Already the world had all but forgotten that series of spectacular plays which had robbed the world of one of the greatest minds since Talleyrand. What a winning for the man who could bring Amidon in after those years of dodging and harry among the world's far corners! Enough, even, to make up in part for all those rankling failures of which Enderby's life seemed to have been made.

Daggett left Enderby, together with a small pack of supplies, on a narrow beach at the foot of a jagged rock cliff on the lea of Amidon's island. Then he sculled away in his deplorable craft toward the adjoining island, some two miles distant. There had been a few vague directions from the cockney as to the lay of the island, and, without wasting time in useless speculation, Enderby began scaling the basalt cliff. The way led up a precipitous ravine and through a smother of low brush, where sea-birds clamored overhead and the surf echoed between the rock walls. He progressed warily, and once he had gained the top, halted to get his bearings. Amidon's abode was somewhere on the farther side of the island. That was as much as he knew.

FROM the top of the cliff he turned and gazed out to sea. From this vantage he got a better idea of the height of the cliff he had just ascended and the utter remoteness of the island. The effect of a huge basket of greenery floating upon the bosom of the ocean was strengthened rather than diminished. The sound of the sea far below him and the winnow of the wind among the rocks gave him a sense of solitude and isolation that was well-nigh breath-taking. The top of the island appeared to be level, and opened out before him like a fairy-land of colorful surprises. Enderby had only eaten a hurried mouthful aboard the boat. Now, with his small pack, consisting of a pair of blankets, a poncho and a few provisions, he struck into the interior of the island, seeking a secluded spot suitable for rest and a midday meal.

The going at first was laborious. In places he had to circumnavigate solid walls of undergrowth where the trailing lianas, interwoven with the lower bush, literally strangled each other in their profusion. Many of the vines and creepers bore flowers of rare beauty, about which the huge, bright-colored butterflies of the South Seas hovered; and the drowsy, irritating droning and microscopic clicking of myriad insect life rose on the still, hot air.

The open vistas grew larger as he progressed. On the edge of one of these natural glades he was startled by a huge dark form which dropped suddenly from a tree and went bounding away. It was a giant gorilla, and the sudden appearance of the beast and the ferocious gleam in its eyes had brought Enderby to a dead stop. The thing filled him with amazement. He was enough of a naturalist to know that none of these small islets had been long enough above water to have brought forth any but the most primitive of animal life. How, then, had this beast come to be here? He conned the matter as he partook of a light meal of canned goods, followed by a drink of tepid water from his canteen.

After he had finished his cheroot, Enderby looked about him and discovered that he had lost track of the spot through which he had entered the glade, as well as the direction he had been following. Leaving his pack, he struck off to the left to reconnoiter a bit. The island, he knew, could not be more than two miles across, and if he could get a general idea of where the shore lay, he could map his progress accordingly.

He had gone only a short distance when the faint echo of the surf again met his ears. A minute later he stood on a cliff-edge, much lower than the one by which he had ascended, and was looking down into a placid little cove directly beneath him. It was protected by a shallow sand-bar at its mouth.

Suddenly Enderby's alert eye caught something that made him drop abruptly behind a screen of bushes. Directly below him there had been a sudden movement, a parting of green fronds near the water's edge, and a slim, lithe figure had darted out across the gleaming sand. Enderby craned far forward to peer down. There was a momentary poising on the shore edge, an instant flash of pearly white as a girlish form shot into the clear water beneath, coppery hair flying, a picture of ecstatic abandon. Enderby watched until she rose with graceful, billowy movements to the surface and struck out with strong overhand strokes for the far shore before he looked away, a slight flush mounting to his bronzed cheek. He noted, before he turned back to the trail, a threadlike path, leading up from the cove to the upper bank beyond.

Quietly, and not without a touch of awe, Enderby made his way back to his clearing. The picture of the girl clung persistently to his mind as he walked. Had she been brown, he would not have wondered, but that matchless white skin, the whole slender statuesque being of her bespoke all that supercivilization could produce.

Enderby found his packs and struck out again. After a long and painful détour, he found the neck of the cove. Then he had to search before he came upon the path he had seen from the opposite cliff. Here, under the green shadow of the trees, it was faintly cool; the trail stretched away before him, bordered by a sea of small waxy-white blooms that gave off a delicately intoxicating odor.

He found himself loitering, in spite of the fact that the afternoon was already waning. In the great peace and stillness, Enderby once more obeyed an impulse to remove his helmet, as he had done that morning. He stood still, breathing deeply in the spicy air. The very ground seemed to thrill with life, and the magic of it all was seeping into him.

A slight movement at the edge of the trail now brought him up sharp. Only a few yards ahead of him there was the slightest rustle, a cautious movement in the bushes. Enderby's hand darted to his hip as the memory of the gorilla returned, but instantly his face relaxed in a smile. A girl's face peered forth from a frame of ferns, a fresh, ardent young face, crowned by an unruly mass of coppery hair. Her big dark eyes were staring at him with the shy, wild curiosity of a creature of the woods, the crisp red bow of her mouth almost quivering with excitement. She seemed part of the woods themselves. This was the naiad of the shaded cove. There was no doubt of that in Enderby's mind. His helmet still in his hand and assuming his most disarming and friendly expression, he stepped forward.

"Hello!" He laughed, "Where did you come from?"

She held her ground an instant longer, then suddenly turned in headlong and precipitate flight, her loose shift flying behind her. Laughing softly, Enderby called after her, then started in pursuit, but he was hampered by his pack. He lost her within a hundred feet. The bush had swallowed her up and the sound of her going. He emitted a low whistle.

"This is getting interesting," he muttered.

ENDERBY searched for nearly half an hour without finding further trace of the girl. Finally he stumbled out on the trail again, scratched and disgruntled by the thorny undergrowth.

"Great business for a man-hunter playing tag with shadows and sprites," he said aloud. "But I'm going to find out about that girl before I leave."

He found the trail again. The bush became thinner rapidly, and presently a man-made clearing opened for his eyes. He was astonished at the sudden change in the landscape, the raw, untrammeled bush giving place to orderly plots of ground under perfect cultivation, fruit-trees and vegetable gardens evidencing exacting care and labor. He pressed on warily now. Quite suddenly, through a vista of betels and palms, a low, rambling bungalow showed. It was a most artistic affair, seemingly of bamboo and grass-thatch, its sides of stringy bark, that was weathered a dull gray, blending to a nicety with dull, sun-baked sod of the roof. A spacious veranda ran round three sides of the place, looking out upon a level compound.

The orange rays of the westering sun slanted across the clearing and fell upon the figure of a tall man in white who sat on the veranda in a deep cane chair. The figure was immobile as a plaster cast, a thin thread of cigarette smoke rising straight above his head on the still air. The man seemed engrossed in reading, yet Enderby felt sure he had undergone the other's scrutiny from the moment he had stepped into the clearing.

Enderby approached quietly to within a

dozen feet of the veranda and coughed propitiously as the other still did not look up.

"Well, don't stand out there. Bring up your packs. You don't expect servants here, I hope."

There was an accent of culture in the voice, but the man on the porch had not raised his eyes from the paper, nor even removed the cigarette from his lips.

"Thanks," said Enderby shortly, depositing his load on the step. "A beastly out-of-the-way place you have here."

"It is none too out of the way for us," the other said curtly. "We came here to escape the prying tomfools of the world, but even here we haven't succeeded."

Enderby was still standing, and the other had not yet deigned to raise his eyes.

"I took it you wouldn't mind if I rested a bit. I was about to ask for a night's lodging, but that would no doubt be presumption."

"We're not in the habit of putting up any one here."

Enderby's face flushed.

"Then I'll rest elsewhere," he said. "You will perhaps have no objection to my making camp somewhere in the open. My object in coming was to get a few specimens. I'd heard the Flower Basket was a great place for the big South Sea butterflies."

He turned 'about. The man Amidon sprang to his feet.

"My dear fellow, don't do that! I thought from your dress you were one of the ordinary island traders, but I see I mistook you most grievously. I detest these island *canaille*. It is really months since I have had speech with a civilized being of my own sex. Please sit down."

AS THE two stood facing, the extreme height of Amidon was in evidence. He topped Enderby's six feet by a good two inches, and his frame was taut and erect, in spite of the graying hairs about his temples and through the odd pointed beard—a beard which had once been tawny auburn. The features were long and almost classically formed, except for a slight twist of the entire face to the left, a twist which often indicates a powerful personality thrown slightly out of true. They bore the reflection of an immense and crafty egotism, steely and utterly inordinate, covered over with the velvet of effete culture.

"Dangerous as a Bengal tiger," Enderby mentally decided; aloud he nodded a curt thanks, allowing himself to be mollified.

"Believe me, it is a rare privilege to talk with a white man," the other went on as Enderby took the proffered chair. "Bug-hunting, you say?"

"Yes. I came down by way of Papeete."

"Ah!"

It was Enderby's turn to be summed up, and he carried it off admirably. His blue eyes looked positively stupid as he removed his helmet to wipe out its leather rim. He had the advantage of being an utter stranger to the man before him.

"My name is Enderby," he opened up. "I say; you've cornered a little chunk of Eden down here. Nothing like it that I ever saw."

"You are right," said Amidon. "It is beautiful. It's taken years—years and work; but it's all mine—every stick and stone of it, and it's out of the beaten path. That's the great wonder. I've traveled a lot, studying life in the world's odd corners, but I've never found anything to equal this."

"You are an artist, perhaps?" questioned Enderby.

"Men have been good enough to call me one," said Amidon, with a thin-lipped smile. "Tell me something of the world's happenings since the war. It's been months since I've heard from the outside."

They smoked and chatted together in the amiable fashion of strangers just met, Enderby telling of the recent trend of world politics and the worth-while things in the world of letters, Amidon putting questions here and there, guiding the trend of talk into his favorite channels, listening with an intensity that was odious to some deep moral sense in Enderby's breast. Somehow it did not seem mete and right for any man to harbor in his breast such a crushing hunger for other things. It was inordinate and beyond all normal bounds. Amidon displayed a knowledge of the underlying causes and effects of the world-war that would have been startling to a member of diplomatic circles.

The talk turned to painting and art, and Enderby glimpsed vistas of culture, taste and refinement that bordered on decadence. He was fascinated by the other's eyes as they talked. They were the most remarkable thing about Amidon. They were a pale steel-gray in color, like light glinting on ice, and were altogether the most disconcerting eyes he had ever looked into.

THE sun was beginning to dip below the jungle edge when Amidon rose.

"Come," he said; "I will show you round my little kingdom." He guided Enderby round to the rear of the bungalow. Here, in an open space of a hundred feet or more between house and jungle, was a long shedlike structure which Enderby had taken for a copra-drying house. It proved to be an extemporary shelter for a queer assortment of animals. A pair of big spotted leopards glared at them from the shadows of the first enclosure. They sprang to a sort of attention at Amidon's approach, and came forward cringingly to snap at the food he flung into the compartment.

"A couple of my pets," he explained. "They're natives of some of the larger islands. I've been training them for the past year and have made them as docile as kittens."

A score or more of little monkeys chattered at them from the next enclosure. From the third, Enderby started back at the stirring of spotted coils through the slats.

"A female anaconda," came Amidon's cool voice. "I got her also from one of the larger islands. She's twenty-eight feet long and not yet full grown. It's been a sort of hobby of mine," he explained, at Enderby's evident revulsion, "collecting these animals. But you have yet to see the prize of my collection. Come; I will show you my tea-gardens. I've imported some of the best Chinese Dowager plants, but as yet I grow only for my own use."

They walked through small, well-kept plots where the bushlike plants were all in bloom, giving off a fragrance such as Enderby had never known existed.

"I also experiment with fruits," Amidon told him. "I have grafted one or two combinations which you will try."

As they turned back to the house, Amidon put his fingers to his lips and sent a shrill, piercing whistle echoing through the jungle. A great shadow fell suddenly across their path.

"Don't be alarmed; it's only Tito," came Amidon's calm voice at Enderby's back.

Enderby stood stock-still as the figure of the huge gorilla he had seen that afternoon emerged from the bushes and came toward them. The creature stood a good six feet in height when it rose up on its hind feet. It came forward with an ungainly, crouching shamble, its great arms swinging near the ground, huge mouth slavering red, showing the yellow, doglike fangs. The thing seemed to have no forehead at all, and only a flattened horror for a nose; utter bestiality was in the flickering, treacherous eyes, in which there were no whites visible—a fearsome spectacle.

"This is the prize of my collection," said Amidon. "I bought him from a sea-captain last year. I've trained him so that he follows me about like a dog. He was originally a dangerous man-killer, but I have impressed my personality into him by degrees until he answers to my every mood. I believe he would die for me."

He stepped forward and faced the creature squarely. The beast's eyes averted instantly, and it dropped to a squatting posture and began fumbling at Amidon's shoe-lace. Amidon gave a sharp command, laying a hand upon one of the beast's great hairy arms.

"Tito," he commanded, "salute!" The huge ape drew himself erect, emitting a mighty growl, and beat his fists upon his chest until it echoed like a drum. "Tito's way of proclaiming to the world his servitude and loyalty," Amidon said smiling.

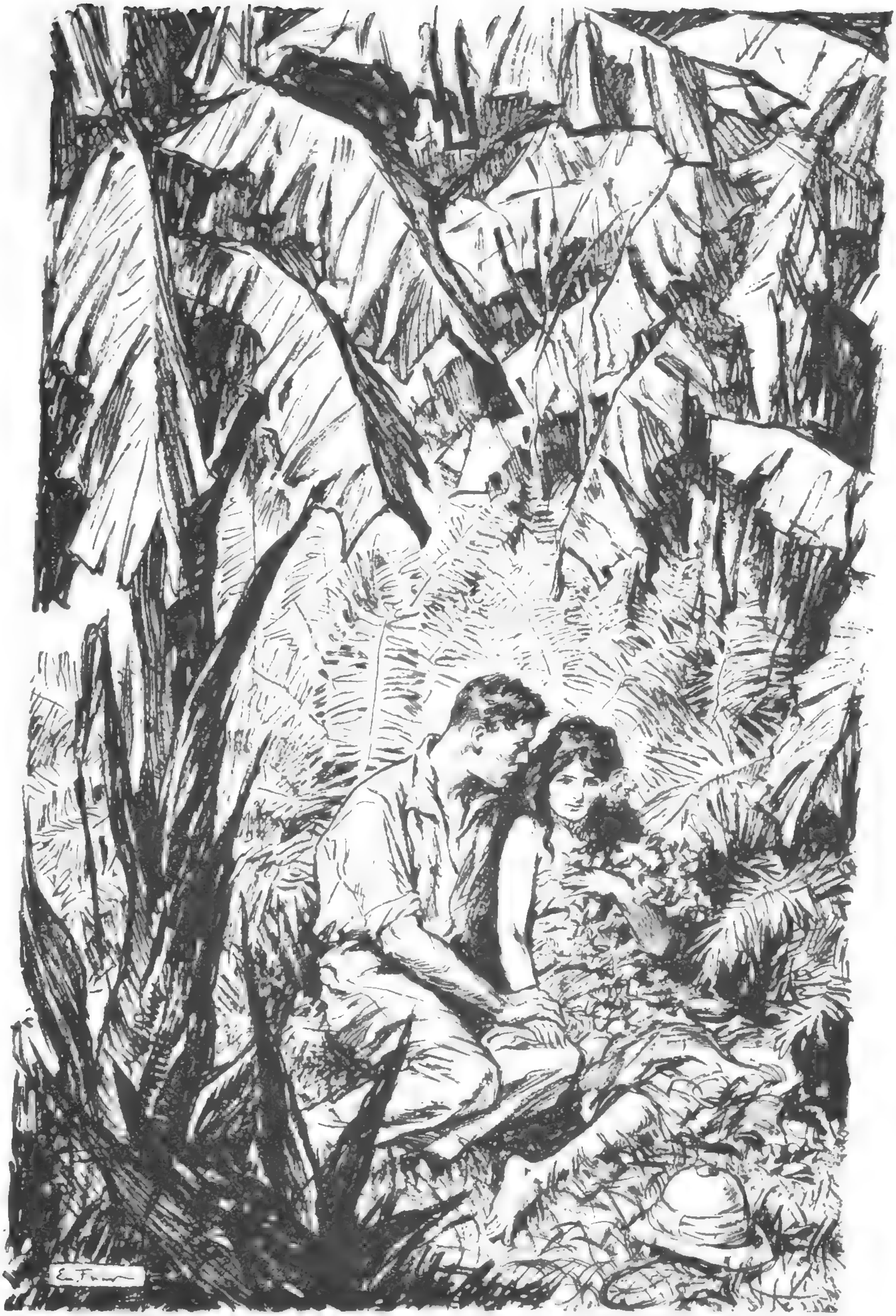
"You mean to say you took him in the wild state and——"

Amidon nodded in a detached manner.

"One of my pastimes here," he said softly. "There is no living creature, Mr. Enderby, that cannot be subjected to the will when one has wakened his higher powers. Some day I will prove that to the world." He spoke in the tired manner of one who has long been misunderstood, his eyes half closed. Then he brought his gaze round to Enderby's face in a quick glance, and once more the younger man had the sense of claws beneath the velvet.

The gorilla padded heavily behind them as they went up onto the veranda. The boards creaked under its great weight. There, it sought a corner, where it evidently slept on a bed of grass.

Enderby was shown the sleeping-room he was to occupy. Before leaving, Amidon faced him in the doorway.



"Nedra," he pronounced huskily, "I've got to leave soon, and then all these beautiful days must end. I love you. Will you come with me?"

"I am only asking you to spend the night," he said. "If I like you, I shall ask you to stay longer. Otherwise, I'll let you know."

He turned in the doorway to bow his inimitable debonair bow, then drifted with nonchalant grace down the hall. As he made a rough toilet, Enderby heard Amidon's voice risen in sharp command somewhere in the rear quarters. He sat down to wait for supper, trying meanwhile to outline his plan of campaign. The South Seas, in matters fantastic, were outdoing themselves for his benefit, it seemed. His mind went back to the girl he had seen in the glade, and to Tito, the great gorilla, the last touch to a bizarre day. The thought of the brute running loose about the place was disconcerting. Whatever he was, or whatever he had done back in the world, the man, Amidon, certainly had something.

PERHAPS the least surprising discovery of all was the fact that the girl of the cove was Amidon's daughter. Enderby had heard the other's story back in the world, and knew that there had been a daughter by one of his sensational matings and a son by another. The former had disappeared from England at the time of her father's flight some twelve years before. Enderby had not dreamed that the girl had followed her father into this exile, still less that the wild, shy creature of the afternoon could be Amidon's. But nothing could astonish him now.

"My daughter Nedra," the planter had said, as Enderby entered the dining-room, "Mr. Enderby."

Enderby took the small, firm hand extended and looked into the same big, defiant eyes that had thrilled him so that afternoon. He saw the involuntary shy suspicion of a hidden and supersensitive idealism, nurtured, no doubt, throughout a solitary girlhood; also the tinge of a youthful, passionate and probably indurated set of ethics, directed at men and the world in general, which he did not doubt had been instilled by the domineering will of the father.

The girl was different to-night. The coppery hair was done up with a sort of artful abandon, and the simple shift of the island girl had been changed for a gown of pale-blue material, evidently something of her own designing. Enderby judged her to be no more than eighteen. Something of intense moral courage and unshakable loyalty he divined in her roused in his breast a different sensation from what had ever burned there before. He recognized the true thoroughbred beneath the rebellious and untamable spirit.

Amidon, too, was changed. Impeccable in white drill, he proved the most gracious and diffident of hosts. In manner didactic and mildly ironic, he dissected the little shortcomings of the human family and thence turned the talk into channels of mysticism, uncorking an amazing knowledge of the occult.

The table was laid with the finest silver and china, and the meal itself would have been a credit to an English country manor. There were two browned pheasants that bespoke a connoisseur's touch, small, varicolored tropical vegetables, dark bread and a plenteous basket of fruit.

The girl said very little, but when she did speak, her eyes flew always to her father's face, as if for sanction. Enderby could not quite fathom her. There was both child and woman in the way she watched him—unwilling curiosity struggling with the misprision that had been woven into the fiber of her. Then and there he set himself to win her trust and confidence.

If Amidon had had any suspicions regarding Enderby's mission, they seemed wholly dispelled now. He put himself out in the rôle of entertainer, although he kept a watchful eye upon his guest. This Enderby felt, rather than noted. A bit of black coffee and a bottle of light Spanish wine capped the repast.

When Amidon proffered a case of cigarettes, Nedra coolly extended her hand for one without the least show of novelty, although her glance lifted to Enderby's face for an instant. He took one from the same case and deigned a smile of approval as she adroitly took a lighted match from him.

"Nedra has learned to keep me company in my solitude," Amidon explained. "I believe there is nothing that so brings the comrade out of a real woman as freedom in such little matters."

"I agree with you," said Enderby.

Amidon led the way out to the veranda. Nedra remained behind. Enderby smiled at her in passing, and once more, as in the afternoon, he saw that twisted, birdlike animation in her face. Just the faintest suggestion of a smile did come—a smile that showed in a little quiver of uncertainty about the lips. Enderby wished she would smile that way again—something of utmost loveliness for him in that apprehensive line of her mouth. Yet, somehow, it made him angry—the pain reflected there. Confound it! What did she think he was? He vowed he would get to the bottom of it. He believed he understood the subterranean undercurrent that ran between father and daughter, but he could not be sure.

On the veranda, Enderby was further astonished when Amidon uncovered a phonograph of a comparatively late American model. He played a small selection of the finest renderings, vocal and orchestral, of a season ago.

"Good music," as Amidon expressed it grandiloquently, "was food for the soul and the muse for all higher thought."

A sudden cry, hoarse, bestial and unspeakably hopeless, broke out from the near bush during the playing.

"Only Tito," Amidon explained shortly. "Music is the bane of his life; it galvanizes the coils of his poor dumb emotions but means nothing to his brain. Do you take any stock in reincarnation? I sometimes think Tito, at times like this, gets a glimpse of how far, how hopelessly far he's fallen, or else how far he has to climb, whichever view applies to the ape family."

They talked on, Amidon maintaining his former charm and fascination. Enderby was finding it hard to correlate things in the quick-moving waters in which Amidon lived and thought.

He decided to plunge recklessly into this new world, forgetting all else for the time being. The girl was an added complication. He must sit tight for a bit, use tact and diplomacy, and battle things out on the other's footing.

Amidon yawned presently, as one who gives way at last to obvious boredom. He rose.

"I have an hour of meditation before retiring each night," he remarked. "Make yourself at home." He tossed away the stub of his cigarette. Then his long eyes closed as he laughed softly—a laugh that was somehow obnoxious to Enderby.

"I think I am going to like you very well," he said in the velvety tones he had used once or twice before. "To think that I almost sent you away! You must arrange to stay on for a time by all means. Do not trouble to rise early in the morning."

He extended a cool hand, and Enderby felt himself dismissed. Presently the American was crossing the compound, walking aimlessly as he smoked a last cigarette. He wanted to get away from the house a bit, to be abroad in the spacious, palm-scented night, alone with his thoughts. He was facing by far the queerest set of conditions he had ever been up against. One thing he felt sure of—that Amidon did not yet suspect his mission. However, it was only a matter of a few days before he would have to show his hand.

QUITE the hardest task, as he saw it, was how to handle the girl Nedra. He wondered how much she knew of her father's past, or if she knew anything. He did not think she could and maintain that burning loyalty for Amidon. For he had sensed in her a philosophy as straight and one-pointed as Truth itself. He imagined Amidon smothering her with his personality all the way up from childhood, nurturing her loyalty for him, playing the part of a genius misunderstood by the world. How was he to break down that thought-form and tell her that her father was an insensate madman as well as a murderer? Already he felt her protective instinct risen against him. He must see her alone. He had a wordless longing to serve her deeply, and felt himself ready for any heroics in her behalf.

Enderby imagined he heard low voices in the bungalow as he came up onto the porch. He was sorry he had not been able to say good-night to Nedra. Under the touch of the moonlight, the whole island was like an exotic heart opening to the night. Enderby was in that state of queer elation—a sort of electric sentiency that comes to a man new to the tropics. He felt he could never sleep again. How lovely the night was! How lovely Nedra was—so natural, so free of all the frosty, hidebound rules of convention! He was on fire for what the day would bring, for he knew a lot more now about why he had come down here.

It was very late when he dropped off at last.

Next morning, with a wry grimace,

Enderby prepared to play butterfly-man. Even Amidon was not a little amused when he appeared after breakfast arrayed in hip-high mosquito-boots and carrying a specimen-box.

"I am out in search of the South Sea Phantom, the huge butterfly that is supposed to thrive in these islands," Enderby explained. "Only two of them have ever been caught. If I could even find their mating-place down here, my name would become a watchword in the entire entomological world."

"Fortune attend you, merry quester!" murmured Amidon from his cane chair.

THE girl had been nowhere in evidence since breakfast, and Enderby, having poked surreptitiously about the premises, believed she must have gone off to some favorite haunt on the shore or in the bush.

He started out for the opposite side of the island, taking the trail by which he had first come to the bungalow. He let the paths take him, and presently found himself in the vicinity of the cove in which he had first seen Nedra Amidon. It was at this juncture that he heard a voice singing at some distance from the bush-bordered trail. It was a woman's voice, a rich, girlish contralto, humming, and it came from somewhere to the right.

It could be none other than Nedra, he reasoned, and quietly made his way toward the sound. Presently the path came out into a natural glade in the jungle. Before him, in an open sunlit space carpeted by ferns and some dainty white flowers, sat the girl of the day before. She was attired once more in the loose shift he had seen her in, and sat cross-legged on the ground with a pile of the waxlike blooms in her lap. She was braiding them into garlands and wreaths as she sang, and her back was toward Enderby. Dumbly he stood and watched her for upward of a minute. He had the feeling of trespassing again, but could not force himself to call out, lest she take to flight.

The singing ceased, and he saw the girl lie back among the flowers. Her eyes were closed. It was then that Enderby stepped forward. She sensed his presence next moment and got to her feet with a quick cry. He stopped, for she seemed once more on the point of flight.

"Don't do that!" he called, laughing. "I'll stay here— No, I won't, either; I'm coming over there and talk with you."

She seemed to think a little better of him now, and held her ground until he was within twenty feet, then she sprang away again. But this time Enderby caught her before she reached the jungle-edge. She struggled like a cat in his grasp; her dark eyes snapped, and he discovered that she had wicked nails.

"Look here!" he cried gruffly. "What do you think I am?"

"I don't know," she panted.

"Well, I do," he said, speaking with precise calmness that belied the trepidation in his heart. She was trembling in his grasp. An unprecedented longing ran through his veins to take her in his arms and force her to believe in him, but he saw that was not the way.

"I'm sorry if I frightened you," he said. "I wasn't spying on you. I heard you singing back on the trail and came toward the sound."

She did not answer. The blood had mounted to her cheeks. She bowed her head under his gaze and fell to sticking one of her toes into the soft earth in confusion. How lovely she was! Her face, tinted a faint, inimitable gold by the tropic sun, was like a delicate flower, her red lips its glowing heart. Enderby felt a return of the first suffused elation.

"Let's sit down a while. I'd like to talk with you, if you don't mind," he said, to cover her embarrassment. "I suppose you're wondering what I'm doing down in these islands. I catch butterflies and other things for the government back in America. Just now I'm looking for the great green-and-yellow butterflies that are supposed to live on these islands. They call them the South Sea Phantoms."

She looked at him in wide-eyed wonder, and he saw that he had made another mistake.

"I know where they are," she said. "I have seen them, but I won't tell you. And if you catch them, I'll hate you."

"Well," he said, "that makes my game look different. I wouldn't have you hate me for anything, and if you feel that way, I won't bother them. I could say I found the place where they live, anyway."

"Is that all you do?" she asked, with

mild scorn. The idea of a man chasing butterflies seemed to disgust her greatly.

"Oh, no," he answered. "I do other work for the government, and when I have the time, I write some. I came down to these islands to catch—oh, different things, but I've found that the most important thing of all is the finding of new and beautiful spots. Do you think it worth a man's while, traveling about like this?"

She nodded her head vigorously.

"It's just what I'd do if I were a man," she said. "I've always wondered what was on all these other islands that father talks of."

They had sat down beside the pile of flowers she had gathered. The little dividing line seemed to have been passed now, although she was still painfully conscious of the scantiness of her attire. Enderby laughed down into her animated face. It was no embarrassment of youth, he felt, yet his whole body quivered with the nearness of this splendid creature.

"Haven't you ever been anywhere?" he asked.

"Not since I was a child," she said, with an elderly gravity that made him smile.

"Listen," he began; "I'll tell you all about the places I've been, if you'll tell me something about yourself."

SHE consented after some hesitation, and Enderby talked on, painting vivid pictures of the life, the cities and the crowds he had known in Northern climes. She seemed to let down her barriers by degrees. She was a growing complication to him, both child and woman. Her eyes met his frankly as a child's; yet they were mature, calling, full of unconscious allurement.

There was not much to tell about her. She recalled very little of her earlier childhood. Her father had gone away when she was six. Shortly afterward, her mother, a famous French beauty, had taken ill and died, leaving her in the care of wealthy relatives who had sent her to school in England. It was not until she was ten that she learned of her father's whereabouts. Soon after, she had gone half-way round the globe to meet him. She had found him at Papeete and they had come here. She had never been away since then. It was because her father was alone and needed her so that she had stayed.

"And do you intend to stay here always?" he asked.

"Some time I shall see the world," she said. "I've thought about it always. My father is all alone, and the world has been so mean to him he will never leave here. They do not understand him."

"Have you ever found out why?"

"Yes; but I am the only one who ever understood him."

Enderby was up a tree. He visioned all the platitudes and artifice Amidon had used to build up this astounding loyalty on which he now rested, and which had become the strongest thing he had to rely on. He, Enderby, hadn't the stuff or the prerogative to break it down. There was a tigerish intensity about father and daughter that made him tread easy. It wouldn't do to crimp things too early in the game. Confound it! He couldn't even play at catching green butterflies now without spoiling her picture of him.

"Let's be getting back to the house," he said grimly, at last.

It was high noon when they arrived. They found Amidon in his usual chair. Once more he did not choose to notice them until they passed directly in front of him. Then he looked up.

"You are evidently well acquainted already," he remarked disinterestedly.

"Yes; we met by chance in the bush," Enderby explained lightly.

Amidon's eyes held the girl a moment.

"It is time to see about dinner," he said shortly. And Nedra passed into the house.

Enderby sat down, and there was a short silence while Amidon gazed at the distant palm-fronds at the jungle-edge. He seemed lost in introspection. Presently he spoke.

"My daughter is a very beautiful girl, Mr. Enderby."

"She is," agreed Enderby warmly.

"Since you seem interested in her, I think it is well to tell you a few things. If you were not a harmless scientific bug-hunter, I would not permit this freedom between you two. These are dangerous and seductive conditions where a mild interest might spring into the quick tropic-love. The very air here is vibrant and spells death to conventions. However, I think you are a man to whom I may speak frankly. I do not wish anything from the outer world brought to my daughter. One reason is this: You see in me a man who has dissipated over five continents, seven seas, and half a dozen archipelagoes. Nedra is the product of that license. Her mother died in disgrace in Honolulu—and the girl herself has the same tempestuous and ungovernable nature which has made me an exile from the world. Furthermore, she is all I have, and I intend to keep her. You are free to stay on for a while; but I shall expect you to carry your emotions in your vest pocket. Otherwise, I'll ask you to leave our little Eden."

He had been eying Enderby with a pale, fixed stare. Now he turned and brooded across the clearing. This was hard for Enderby's kind to assimilate, especially as he knew from the girl's own story that it was a cowardly and malignant lie against her.

"Am I to take it that you intend to keep your daughter from love always?" Enderby asked.

"I do not intend; I am determined," Amidon returned shortly.

IN THE growing magic of the days that followed, Enderby forgot his mission entirely, and all the rules and standards by which he had judged life back in the world. He was much with Nedra Amidon. The girl rarely stayed indoors, but spent her days in the open, roaming the bush and the shore. By degrees she had come to confide and trust in him—a subtle, alchemic process, delicate as the unfolding of a flower. She showed him all the secrets of her island playground. Her favorite spots were the cove, and a great natural amphitheatre in the center of the island, carpeted with ferns and flowers and surrounded by the massive forest trees. Together they attempted surf-riding in a rough boat that Enderby had constructed, and often there were long rambles together.

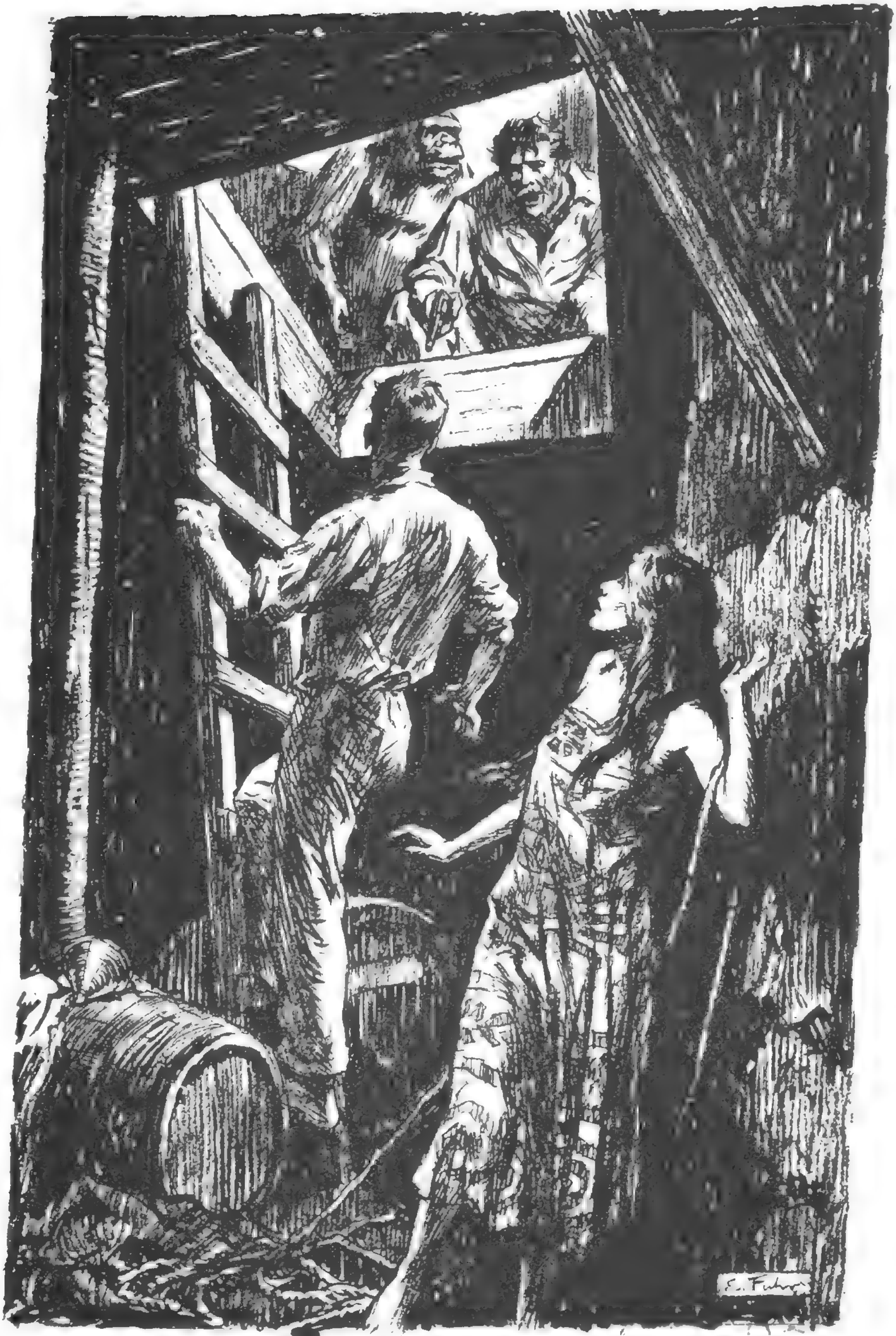
Every morning, as the flaming dawn began to spill its golden light into the little cove, Enderby ran down for his morning dip. He took a deep joy in the way the sun sank into him, burning his skin a deep brown, and often, lying in the warm sand after the exhilarating tingle that comes from a fight with the breakers, the world and all reality seemed to fall away and his mission looked small and laughable—even the greatest rewards the world could offer. This country seemed to bring only the natural and true from a man. It was all like some golden dream of a time when life was simple and pure, and Nedra Amidon was the heart and fabric of the dream. At these times he could overlook everything that Amidon was or had been, because he had brought so wonderful a creature as Nedra into the world. But always the thought of Amidon's selfish preception of the girl's life and liberty returned with its initial rancor.

Amidon, to say the least, was unstable and erratic. What manner of talks Nedra had with her father, Enderby never knew, but he felt that the planter missed nothing of what took place. Often he was conscious of Amidon's taking stock of him with cold analysis, but he was unable to read the other's thoughts. Amidon's face was an enigma. By the end of the fourth day, Enderby saw that all life was going to be made or broken for him by the outcome of his sojourn here.

In whatever time or place he and Nedra might have met, each would have found in the other some lasting allurement. But here, close to the breast of nature and worked upon by the all-pervading freedom and creative impulses of the bush, they saw each other through a mystic and beautifying light. Glamour was at its highest, and every sense and instinct was supernormally acute. Enderby's youth had been sadly delayed; his life had been intense and quick-moving. Now he was feeling for the first time the long-craved intoxication of reversion to simple things. It was as Amidon had said; the tropics did away with all precedence—human love and life here took on the same abandon as that of the wild creatures and the great plants. Again and again Enderby found himself dreaming of a future with Nedra Amidon, but always the daunting shape of the father loomed before him, and he saw no way of avoiding his former issue.

He was returning home with Nedra along the cove trail that night when the thing really struck him. She was just ahead of him, running light and graceful as a gazelle. Her arms were full of a new red bloom they had found that day. He watched with admiration the swaying of her lithe figure as she preceded him, and felt once more that queer, panic-stricken longing in his breast that almost choked him.

It was at the bend of the trail where she had first hidden from Enderby that Nedra



A scream of warning was wrung from the American's lips: "Behind you! Look out!" He had seen the sudden looming of another form just back of Amidon's shoulder.

obeyed one of her sudden wild impulses and darted off to the left toward their favorite glade. She was always hiding from him in this fashion; they had come to be like two care-free children together. Her elfish laughter ringing in his ears, Enderby gave pursuit, his pulses tingling. It was right there that he made his big decision. Neither Amidon nor any living being had a right to thwart this magic thing that had sprung up in his heart unbidden. He was even willing to forego his settlement with Amidon, for the girl meant more than all that.

He found her presently, hiding from him in a deep fern thicket. They sat down together to rest a minute before turning back, both of them flushed and elated from the chase. Each was acutely conscious of the tides of life pulsing through the other, so close together, and each seemed to sense a new and different nearness than had ever come before.

Slowly Enderby encircled her waist and drew her, flowers and all, into his arms. She did not demur, only gazed up at him with wide starry eyes, and he kissed her slowly, reverently upon the lips. Her own were warm and yielding. She gave a tired little sigh and for a moment nestled close to him with utter contentment. Then they sat back, glowing, wordless, and to each the other seemed illumined in that instant by some intense spiritual longing and purity.

"Nedra," he pronounced huskily, after a moment, "I've got to leave soon, and go back to the world, and then all these beautiful days must end. I love you. Will you come with me?"

It all came out with a rush, just as he had known it would—all the vague stirrings he had felt that first day on the trail. There was nothing more to say. Love was enough, and each knew that love had come. He didn't even think of Amidon.

A moment longer he held her close; she seemed like a part of the subtle warmth, the soft shadows and the flower-scented air of the bush. Then she drew away and a frightened, troubled look came into her eyes.

"I want it," she said. "Oh, I want it, too; but it cannot be. I couldn't go and leave him here. He has nothing to live for but me. It has been so wonderful, but now we must be very sensible and forget.

Enderby was facing the show-down. How was he to tell her the truth about her father? His crimes, from the world's standpoint, could never be believed by her, and, furthermore, he could not bring himself to speak. His moment of indecision was settled in a totally unlooked-for manner. Two lean, sinewy hands suddenly closed upon his wrists, jerking his arms from about the girl's shoulders. A cold wave seemed to envelop Enderby, and he sprang up to look into the blazing eyes of Amidon.

All that had been lyric in his breast turned on the instant to gall and wormwood. A moment the two stood confronting; then Amidon released the American's wrists.

"Just as I thought!" he snarled. "The warning I gave you would have been enough had you been the harmless scientist you impersonated. Bug-hunter—bah! I've watched you; I know every move you've made since you came. You've caught no butterflies since the first day. Neither are your packs those of a naturalist. Did you take me for a fool that you thought I'd stand by and let an outsider steal my daughter's affections and disrupt the plans of years?"

Amidon's long face fairly glittered with a jealous rage that almost shook his body. Enderby had never withstood such a shaft of concentrated malevolence as the other was turning upon him. For a moment he was on the point of heated argument, but he saw the ridiculousness of that.

Amidon's eyes turned upon the girl.

"Nedra," he commanded, "run along to the house! I want a word with Mr. Enderby alone." She did not obey at once, but stood gazing from one to the other with a look of frightened appeal. "Go!" commanded Amidon again.

THE two men stood in an ominous silence until she had disappeared down the trail. Then Amidon spoke again.

"You were cleverer than I gave you credit for, Enderby, but you ought to have known I'd be taking no chances. For twenty-five years I've been persecuted by the ignorant criterion of a damn-fool world, driven from one stinking outpost to another until I chanced upon this loneliest speck in the Pacific. But even here they send a sneaking ferret like you to smell me out. Yes; the game's up, Enderby. I let you play at love while I sent a servant to Aribibu to investigate. Now I'm going to kill you. You've come into my little domain. There's no law here but my word. Anything can happen here. I suppose you've heard the story of Grenwood, the other agent they sent down here. His body was shipped back in a lead box after he had been found in the bush, killed by a big snake. Some said it was an anaconda."

He smiled, baring his long white teeth. Instinctively, Enderby's hand dropped to his belt; then he was minded that he hadn't even thought of carrying a weapon for the past three days.

"Your pistol is at the house," Amidon said coolly. "Unless you have other weapons on you, you are totally unarmed. I also took the shells out of your gun and all that I found in your dunnage."

For a moment Enderby could hardly credit the truth of the statements he had just heard. He had utterly forgotten all this sort of thing, but, even with his knowledge of predatory men, he had to recoil at the look in the other's distorted face.

"I'm not Grenwood," Enderby returned. "And you'll find that out very soon. I think your little kingdom is going to suffer a reorganization. Even down here there is a law, Mr. Amidon, and I'd advise you to do nothing out of the ordinary. Why, confound you, I'd almost decided to let you off, and blacken my own honor because of the love of your daughter! Now that you're bringing the fight to me, you'll have to take the consequences."

A devil looked out of Amidon's eyes.

"You defy me?" he cried hoarsely. "You come alone to my stronghold and threaten me? There is no man who can do that and live!" For a moment it seemed as if he would fling himself bodily upon the American.

"Don't be a fool, Amidon! Do you think I came here unknown? Even now I've got a fire of dry brush ready to touch off on the north cliff, and a man waiting on the next island. The first sign of smoke will bring him and a half-dozen others within three hours. Even if you got me, they're due here to-morrow, according to agreement."

The planter emitted something between a whine and a snarl. Enderby leaped sidewise into the bush at the same moment that two bullets ripped through the leafage. A third followed, and he felt a burn like a scald across his left side. The shots stopped. He heard a curse, and the click of an empty chamber. Even as he lunged into the open again, there was time for a prayer of thanks that the gun in Amidon's hand was not an automatic. The man was an insensate and dangerous fool, even as he had feared.

Next moment, they rolled to the ground together. Enderby was lean and ingrained, and had always imagined himself stronger than most men. He fought with the madness of desperation, but he had never come in contact with such strength as Amidon was bringing to bear. He had a purchase low down on the other's waist, a grip that would have broken most men, but Amidon had stiffened to whalebone and would not give. Enderby felt himself being wrung dry of his strength like a rag.

After the first half-minute it was an unequal battle. They rose to their knees. Amidon's right arm, the arm with the gun, jerked free from the other's pinioned grip. Enderby had to catch it with his left as it came down—a blow that would have broken his skull had it landed. Thus they locked, glaring into each other's faces. The pistol that Enderby held from its crashing descent seemed bearing down with tons of pressure somewhere far above his head. Each moment he was weakening under the terrific strain, for his wound was bleeding profusely.

Somehow they were on their feet again, and the gun in Amidon's right hand was lowering slowly, a quarter of an inch at a time, toward the level of Enderby's head. He saw that he would have to end it at once. With a sudden catlike wriggle, he wrenched his right sleeve free of Amidon's grasp and dealt the other a quick blow, at the same time springing free. As the other tottered backward, Enderby darted once more into the cover of the undergrowth. Two more shots followed after him, but sang harmlessly overhead. Fifty yards away he turned and shouted back through cupped hands:

"I'm coming back, Amidon! Don't forget; and when I do, it will be a show-down."

STRAIGHT toward the cove he sped, and then turned toward the rocky cliffs by which he had first climbed to the island's plateau. He had made sure before starting that Amidon was not giving pursuit. His goal was the great pile of brush and wood he had thrown together the first day—the signal-fire which was his one chance of calling help. He cursed himself for a fool for not having thought of his weapon. Now he was alone and totally unarmed, more or less at the mercy of a man whom he believed to be demented. But now it was not Amidon he feared. Once he had heard a long-drawn whistle as he ran, and the stirring horror in the back of his mind had to do with Tito, the giant gorilla, whom he knew was the slave of Amidon. Even now the beast might be stalking him somewhere in the back bush.

He reached the beacon-fire at last and set it ablaze, and then the realization came that darkness was already close. It would be well into the night before help could be expected to arrive, and it was highly doubtful whether Daggett or any of his companions would be familiar enough with the island to find Amidon's place in the dark. He could not wait on that account, for he saw clearly that his place was near the girl now. He had seen the beginnings of mental breakdown in Amidon's face. The man might be capable of anything now. Then, too, there was a slim chance that he might enter the bungalow under cover of night and procure a knife or some other weapon.

It was the bravest thing Enderby ever did when he turned his back on the shore and plunged once more into the darkening bush. He had nothing to defend himself with but a club he had picked up, not even a pocket-knife. Night fell quickly. It was thick and smothering beneath the heavy vegetation. Shadows took on fantastic forms, and countless times he froze into immobility at suspicious rustlings which his imagination embodied with horror. His heart grew cold lest he had played wrong to leave the girl in the beginning.

AGES passed before he stumbled into the broader trail that led to the compound. He made a long and cautious détour in the bush. This would fool Amidon if he were watching for him. When he gained the edge of the clearing at last, he found the entire bungalow in darkness. The moon was just beginning to rise above the trees, and house and outbuildings stood out, darker blots against the far jungle. Absolute silence reigned. This added to the panicky feeling in his heart, for there was no telling what had happened in his absence. He felt suddenly very weak. His side pained him terribly, and his shirt was soaked with blood. He felt he had aged ten years in the past half-hour.

Very cautiously he ventured out across the compound, having first removed his shoes and left them at the edge of the clearing. He circled to the rear of the house, but not a sound of any kind reached him. The back door was closed. He did not try it. Stooping low and keeping to the blackest shadows, he traversed to the front veranda. He had the feel of lurking danger now, but he had to know what had happened in that house.

A step at a time, testing each board before he trusted his weight upon it, he crossed the veranda. The front door was open, and the moonlight was beginning to slant in a wan path across the threshold. It cast the faintest misty reflection for a few feet within the open door. A long time he stood silent, listening. It was folly to suppose that Amidon was sleeping. That complete stillness meant deeper deviltry, unless by chance Amidon was abroad, stalking him.

Finally he stepped across the threshold and backed quickly against the wall to one side, his eyes straining into the blackness, expecting each moment a shot from the interior. It did not come. Nothing stirred, and his eyes, gradually focusing themselves in the dimness, could make out nothing suspicious in the room. After a minute he stepped forward again, aiming for the door of Amidon's room on the chance that he might find a weapon of some kind there.

It was as he neared the other door that something caused the hair to stir along the back of his head. It was an odor that assailed his nostrils, the unmistakable acrid smell of an animal in close, pent quarters. Enderby backed away from the inner door just as the oblong patch of moonlight behind him was suddenly shut off by the closing of the door. A key clicked in the lock, and he whirled to look into the gleaming shaft of a dark lantern that had been suddenly opened.

"I thought you'd be fool enough to walk in here," came Amidon's cold, colorless voice. "I was wrong to open fire on you back in the bush. I'm going to get you now, Enderby, but not by the clumsy method of a bullet. There are better ways that involve no penalty. No use thinking of flight; the entire house is locked and bolted." He set his dark lantern down on a table, the slide still open.

IT WAS then that Enderby saw the grisly form in the far corner. It was Tito, the gorilla. The beast had evidently been lying on a mat at the foot of the divan where Amidon had reclined. He rose now on his hind legs at the snapping of Amidon's fingers, his eyes glowing red, and mouth slavering with pent emotion.

"Get him, Tito!" came Amidon's strident command. He pointed a long finger at Enderby. "Kill, damn you; kill!"

The beast's mouth opened wide in horrid, inarticulate sounds of battle, eyes blazing with sweeps of the mindless ferocity with which the man was instilling him. His eyes riveted on the brute, Enderby backed through the open door at the left. It was in the dining-room he found himself. In the moment of the beast's indecision, he turned quickly and flung himself against the door in the rear. It did not give.

He whirled, expecting swift destruction. Instead, he heard a different, whimpering note from the other room, above it Amidon's voice risen high in sudden febrile anger. The ape had been slow to obey, and the hesitation had played havoc with the planter's already tottering reason. The next moment he saw Amidon leap across the room and snatch a heavy cane from the wall. In a frenzy of rage he began belaboring the gorilla mercilessly about the head and shoulders. The man's eyes burned with an utterly insensate madness as the cane rose and fell with uncontrolled fury.

The ape had backed, whining, into a corner, out of Enderby's range of vision. In the pigeonholed moment that followed, he thought of flight by way of a window, but the open space between the house and the jungle seemed impossibly wide and hopeless, and there remained to find the girl. His eye, flinging about him, fell upon an iron ring in the dining-room floor. It was the trap-door to Amidon's wine-cellar, through which he had often seen the planter descend. Enderby never could tell what moved him at that moment, but it was something outside of his own mind and will that made him shoot back the bolt and heave the heavy trap upward. Quickly he let himself down into the cool blackness, dropping the trap in place above him.

In the dank, earthy darkness, Enderby could not see his hand before his face. His fingers fumbled over the door with a fool idea of trying to bolt it from beneath. He struck a match to take stock of the interior. The next moment he uttered a startled exclamation and strode to the far corner. A sort of bundle there had caught his eye, wrapped round and round with strong manila rope. It had moved slightly, and he had caught the gleam of a white face. It was Nedra. Her mouth was securely gagged by a heavy swathing of cotton cloth, and she was unable to move hand or foot. The match burned Enderby's fingers. With an oath he bent to loosen the gag.

"Did he hurt you? Can you stand?" he asked tensely.

"I am all right; but he frightened me so! I fought him after he shot at you in the bush. He seemed to go suddenly mad there. I thought he had killed you. He was all changed, and brought me home and locked me in here. Oh, what is it? What is the matter with him now?"

"It's Tito," Enderby said. "Your father's beating him because he wouldn't help kill me. Is there another entrance to this place?"

"No."

"Then we're trapped," he said. "It's my fault. I knew all along what he was, but I dallied about and let him get the upper hand. Whatever happens, Nedra, remember I love you."

The sounds of the beating had stopped abruptly in the upper room. They heard Amidon fling his cane into a corner and his tread on the floor above. Then he had lifted the trap-door and they heard his laugh—a freezing, unholy sound that had lost all semblance of humanity.

"So you found her even there, you damned rat! So much the better. Now she can see you die. Quite dramatic, isn't it? Come out into the light, and let's hear you whine." He had dropped to his knees, still with that mad laugh baring his teeth. "There's no way out of there. Come forward alone, or, by heaven, I'll kill you both! I think I shall, anyhow. I'm going to start shooting in another half-minute. There isn't a beam or a crevice you can hide behind. Are you coming?"

Enderby bent quickly, kissing Nedra full on the lips.

"Don't do that," he whispered, as she clung to him hysterically. "It's all right. Hold on, Amidon!" he called. "I'm coming up to you. See; here I am coming into the light, but for God's sake wait till I come up! Can you see me?"

"The hero—oh, the hero!" Amidon whined in a sort of hellish glee. "Yes; I see you. Oh, the hallowed things that are done in the name of love!"

In the wavering light of the lantern behind Amidon's crouching figure, the palely blazing eyes and the laugh back of the pointed satyr's beard made of him a demoniacal figure, sprung out of some ancient fable. Enderby's foot was on the bottom rung of the ladder, Amidon's finger crooking gently about the trigger, when a scream of warning was wrung from the American's lips:

"Behind you! Look out!"

He had seen the sudden looming of another form just back of Amidon's shoulder, a hairy, incarnate horror. In the same moment, two great arms plucked Amidon bodily from the lighted opening, and he was swung aloft with the ease with which a man tosses a child. The revolver dropped clattering at Enderby's feet. Tito had come back into his own.

The writhing pair disappeared from Enderby's view. What followed was a pandemonium of sounds that might have issued from the Pit itself, hoarse, bestial snarlings, and above it the hideous screaming of a man disintegrating in the flesh.

Enderby had snatched the fallen weapon and bounded up the ladder, but Amidon was already past all help.

Enderby emptied five cartridges into the brute's breast and head before it sank to the floor, kicking itself out with mighty spasms. Sick with horror, the American closed the door into the front room before he called to the girl below. His limbs were heavy as death as he let himself painfully down the ladder.

NEAR dawn, when Daggett, the beachcomber, arrived with four men from the neighboring island, they found the Amidon bungalow a scene of devastation. In a hammock on the veranda they found Enderby unconscious with fever from a bullet-wound in his side. He was being nursed by an hysterical girl with wide, horror-filled eyes. In the closed front room of the bungalow lay the mutilated body of the planter beside that of a dead gorilla.

It was six days before Enderby became cognizant of anything round him. He lay in his old room at the house of Monsieur Daban, in Aribibu, babbling deliriously in the grip of the fever, while through his head ran an endless pageant of unmitigated horror. Nedra Amidon hovered close, tending to his every want. In her pale, harrowed face a slow transfiguration was taking place, something like a new birth. Wounds do not heal quickly in the tropics, but Enderby's untainted vitality won out at last.

It was the afternoon of the eighth day that he first essayed to sit up among the pillows. His temperature had dropped to normal the previous night, but his head was still aswim and his mouth metallic with the dregs of the quinine he had taken. For hours he had lain absolutely still, appallingly weak, his mind still haunted by gruesome fantasies. He didn't even want to think, but just relax in the warm, soothing breeze that stole in through his open window.

The door opened, and Nedra entered, followed by Monsieur Daban, with the inevitable yellow cigarette between his fingers. There was a cablegram and some mail for him to attend to. Enderby took them from Daban's hand with utter disinterest, even when he noted the stamp of the head office in New York on three of the envelopes. He fell to laughing from sheer weakness, so that Nedra had to open them for him. He was still chuckling without reason after he had scanned the cryptic messages.

Daban was smiling at him when he looked up, his old peculiar smile, that was irritating no longer to Enderby.

"Doubtless things are pressing you back home, *monsieur*. I came in to say that a ship is leaving for the north in ten days, and if you wish me to book a passage——"

Enderby looked out of the window to where the little tropic town lay half-hidden beneath its palms. A smile wrinkled the corners of his eyes.

"No," he said. "One way and another, I've seen a lot of life round the world, Daban. Nedra and I have been talking it over, and I've decided to try the lotus stuff for a while before going back. Anyway, you know, I've stayed over my fortnight." He laughed. "There isn't a hope for me now."

The
Rise *of* Spotty Lafitte

A Tale That Contains More Than an Adequate Amount of Short-Story Interest, and Something Besides. What is Respectability, Anyway?

By William C. McCloy

"LEFT — left — both — hard — three — stop!"

Spotty Lafitte, kneeling in the bow of his weather-beaten yawl and catching sight of the dim light from the lantern on the end of the pier, called in a low voice to Giuseppe Paola at the oars. The midnight darkness, the February drizzle, though well suited for river-piracy, had made progress slow and difficult. The yawl had crept over the East River as furtively as a rat emerges from its hole. As they drew nearer, Spotty rose and stretched his neck to look over the pier. The dim outlines of the boxes of olive-oil he had seen piled up on the pier late that afternoon grew slowly more distinct. Presently Spotty reached out a cautious hand, caught hold of the pier and began to draw himself up. But in spite of the storm—or because of it—the watchman was awake. He fired; Spotty dropped back into the yawl and Giuseppe pulled hard.

The shot called two policemen to the chase along the river-front, but Spotty and Giuseppe safely reached their haunt under a pier three blocks away and lay still. In a little while they heard the policemen hard at work, searching the wharf overhead. They came to the entrance of the haunt.

"They must have gone under somewhere round here," said a voice.

The remark reassured Spotty. Plainly the policeman hadn't seen them disappear.

"Shall we go under—what do you say?" asked a second voice.

A brief discussion followed, but the voices fell so low that Spotty couldn't make out just what was said.

"Fire a shot under—for luck," was the next thing he heard.

A moment of silence; the river-pirates crouched low. A shot rang out on the early-morning air. Spotty felt Giuseppe slump down in the seat ahead without a sound.

"They're not there—or that would have made 'em squeal," said the first voice.

Spotty waited until the receding footsteps died away. Then he put his mouth to Giuseppe's ear.

"Did you get it?"

"In me breast," whispered Giuseppe, catching Spotty's hand and guiding it to the wound.

Spotty tore off the end of his shirt and tried to stop the flow of blood. It was no use. The river-piracy days of Giuseppe were over. In the silence and darkness, Spotty waited for three hours, listening to the monotonous lapping of the water against the pier and the labored breathing of his companion, whose head now lay on his shoulder. When Giuseppe finally gave his last gasp, Spotty began to think of what he would do with the body, and was still thinking when he heard a rustle behind him. He struck at it with his hand. An answering squeak decided Spotty's question for him. He laid the dead man down, untied the painter of the yawl, weighted the body with an anchor they had picked up together the night before, rowed to the entrance and, in the early morning, pushed Giuseppe overboard. Then Spotty pulled the boat back, washed his hands and his coat, and cautiously crawled to the wharf. He hurried to the Bowery. Jimmy Garvan was just opening his saloon. Spotty passed under the sign announcing that Garvan sold the "biggest high hat in New York for five cents." Spotty took off his coat, placed it over the back of a chair before the stove to dry, stepped to the bar and uttered a laconic,

"High hat."

Garvan poured a high glass full of a drink that looked like whisky. Spotty took it, dragged over another chair and sat down by the stove to sip his drink and wait for his coat to dry.

Garvan's early customers sauntered in and out, and Spotty noticed—what he had never noticed before—that each of them treated Garvan with deference, even the policeman who looked in at the door.

"Jimmy's respectable—I got to turn respectable," thought Spotty, "and I will—right now."

This decision was not the result of anything so impuissant as a moral awakening, but was entirely due to the sudden realization that his inherited contempt for all law, which found expression in river-piracy, had become too hazardous. And Spotty's idea of what constituted respectability differed from that of most people. His was no complacent assumption of moral superiority to those about him; it took the more practical form of a desire to be free from the attentions of the police, so that he would not have to skulk round the corner every time he saw a bluecoat just ahead of him.

SPOTTY was the scion of a Colonial family. There was nothing about him or his life that would lead any one to suspect such a heritage. In his own favorite habitat—the vicinity of Pell Street—he was a common and familiar type. Short, deep-chested, broad-shouldered, he appeared to be a more recent contribution from the Gallic peasantry of Europe. His dark features, broad face and black hair added to this impression. A keen, humorous look in his large dark-brown eyes overcame the feeling of repulsion caused by the disfiguring marks of an early attack of smallpox, from which he derived the name of "Spotty." There was a tradition in the family that the first Lafitte—Jean-Jacques—came to this country as a cook in the train of Lafayette and settled on the Bowery when it was a land of flowers. According to the tradition handed down to Spotty, his ancestor opened a bake-shop after the war and prospered until President Jefferson's embargo ruined his business. Then Jean-Jacques began to run flour to Canada. When the embargo was repealed, Jean-Jacques found an easy living as a porter alongshore, picking up what he could. His son dropped the laborious end of this business and devoted himself to picking up more slyly. The grandson and the great-grandson went still further and devoted themselves to picking up whatever they could—after dark. An inherited contempt for law is always progressive in families.

Spotty sipped the last of his high hat, put the glass down on the chair, felt his coat, found it comparatively dry, and started for home. His family was just finishing breakfast. There were four of them—his wife, a slender, worn-out woman of forty, of Breton extraction; Delphine, a girl of thirteen; Tommy, a boy of ten, named for his father, and Lily, a child of six. Never before had the squalor and the poverty of his family and his home so oppressed Spotty as now. His forlorn wife stood at the side of his bright-eyed and graceful daughter, and he saw what the one had been and what the other would become.

Delphine was the only one who spoke. As he entered, she looked up and called out in surprise, "*Mon père!*" Spotty remembered that his mother, in whose memory a few French words and traditions lingered—like the last sputterings of a candle—had taught Delphine those words on finding that the baby was beginning to call him "Spotty," as every one but his mother did. Now all that was left to the Lafittes of their French traditions were these two words of Delphine.

The children hurried off to school. Spotty drank a cup of coffee and went to bed. But not to sleep. There was too much to think about. His newly born desire for something different, something within the law—in short, for respectability—had grown stronger when he saw his children. They were growing up. In a flash he recalled the words of the visiting public-school teacher to his wife a few weeks before: "It is a pity so pretty a child as Delphine, with so good a mind, should be brought up in such surroundings." He had laughed then—but now— Spotty sat up in bed.

"I'll go see The Fixer—right now," he said. "He ought to know something."

Spotty found The Fixer—a short, heavy-faced, middle-aged man, youthfully dressed—at Pell Street and the Bowery. He had another name—Joe Jeffreys—but his business of buying things that the possessor was too wise or too timid to offer for sale had gained for him the other. In a few words Spotty explained that he was through on the river and wanted to get something respectable—within the law—like a saloon. Jeffreys listened quietly.

"I'll fix you, Spotty," he said. "We'll go see Johnny Barlton."

The Fixer led Spotty to a pawnbroker's shop on the Bowery. In at the side door, up to the second floor they passed, neither of them saying a word. While Spotty waited in an outer room, Jeffreys went straight into a smaller room to the right. He came out in a little while, and, with a wave of his hand, motioned to the smaller room, into which Spotty went alone. There he saw a sleek, fat, expensively dressed man, with a carefully cut small mustache and a faint trace of powder on his face—he had just come from his morning visit to his barber. On the desk before him Spotty saw a fat hand, soft and white, with varnished nails—obvious and indubitable evidences of the respectability that Spotty craved.

Barlton looked at Spotty steadily.

"Jeffreys tells me you are a square guy and want to open a saloon. I've got a vacant store on Pell Street, and I'll get a brewer to stake you—for a percentage. That two years' stretch—keep it dark and run careful."

That was all. When Spotty and Jeffreys reached the Bowery again, The Fixer said,

"The next time you see Giuseppe, tell him I got rid of that watch and I've got seventeen dollars for him."

Spotty promised.

FROM the start, the quest of respectability was successful. In addition to alleviating the alcoholic thirst of his friends, Spotty found other sources of income that were free from police censorship. He opened a "stable of prize-fighters," a "ladies' room" for the vestal virgins of the Bowery who were attracted by the gladiators, and he subsidized the guides of the slumming parties to bring their wide-eyed charges to his saloon for a close and friendly talk with a former river-pirate. To those of the latter group who ordered refreshments, Spotty told a story of his career on the river—a story that was always interesting, even if it was not always true.

Spotty made money—made it rapidly, rejoiced in his new-found respectability, and, above all, reveled in his freedom from police surveillance. Before long, in the fulness of his pride, he was able to stand on the corner—as his ideal, Barlton, did—in broad daylight, conversing with bluecoats in a friendly way, and assure them that no sleeping man would ever be robbed in his place.

With this confidence and assurance, and improved finances, came other things. Respectability in families, like crime, is progressive. It marked a mile-stone—the day that Spotty moved his family up-town to a small apartment—not a flat—just off the Drive, and with this came such things as were in keeping with such a neighborhood—even a used automobile.

Delphine was sent to a commercial college, and her father proudly saw her make friends with a better and altogether different class of young people from that which he had ever known.

In her new environment, the girl developed rapidly. The underfed child of the Bowery blossomed into a comely young woman—tall and lissome in figure, with oval face, well-rounded throat, smiling brown eyes and an abundance of dark-brown hair. Spotty's frequent references to respectability early wakened a latent love of social conventions that appealed to her inherited vivacious temperament. Respectability became her religion. She looked after the manners and language of the two other children, and even the bedraggled mother dropped the air of merely enduring life like an animal and began to live again. Now and then Delphine ventured to instruct Spotty himself.

"Go to it," was his only reply. "You can't get too much respectability for me."

Delphine never spoke of the saloon after they moved up-town, but sometimes referred to Spotty's business down-town, usually coupling this with the regret that it was not so respectable as she wished. Spotty always heard this in silence until Delphine informed him that a fellow pupil at the commercial college—Mr. Theodore Stanwood—was to call that evening, and Spotty was to put on his best clothes and not to mention the saloon. Spotty was resentful for a moment. He felt that Delphine was getting away from him. But Mrs. Lafitte, for the first time in her married life, boldly supported Delphine against her father. Spotty put on his best clothes.

THE call proved an important event in the lives of the Lafitte family. When Spotty looked over the straight-cut youth of twenty-three, he could see nothing but the promising material for a lightweight pugilist. Mrs. Lafitte anxiously kept her eyes on the clock. Neither of them had an opportunity to say anything. Delphine kept Stanwood talking about himself—his experiences in the Argonne, how he had been made a sergeant—a subject of absorbing interest to Spotty—and just as he was beginning to feel enough at ease to ask Stanwood a question, Mrs. Lafitte intervened and led him back to the kitchen.

"What did you pull me out so soon for?" he asked resentfully.

"She"—Mrs. Lafitte usually referred to Delphine now with a deferential "she"—"she told me to take you out in ten minutes. She didn't want you to make any cracks. He's real class."

Spotty got a chance to express himself after Stanwood had gone.

"He's all right. He's real respectable."

Delphine saw her opportunity.

"If you could only give up that terrible saloon—and get into something better——"

"What's the matter with the saloon? The police know I run it respectable."

"I'm forever afraid somebody will mention it. Pell Street—it's awful!"

The feeling he had had earlier in the evening grew stronger. Delphine was getting away from him. She went on,

"*Mon père*"—Delphine always used those two words when pleading with her father—"won't you try someway to—give it up?"

Spotty got up abruptly and went to his bedroom. He thought long and hard. He finally made up his mind it would be a good thing to sell out and open a restaurant uptown—and he made up his mind to do it at once.

But Spotty didn't know what was coming. Wiser and farther-seeing men than he didn't believe it would come as soon as it did. Before he could turn round, prohibition overtook him. He couldn't sell out, grew bewildered, and was overwhelmed. He had reveled in his life within the law, but he saw now that he couldn't pay the price and was likely to lose it all. Delphine openly rejoiced at the change, declaring that it would prove the best thing that ever happened to him. Encouraged by her, he spent several futile weeks seeking employment—until his money was exhausted. He had hoped Delphine, who had completed her course at the commercial college, would find a place, but she, too, failed. In his desperation, he had several times thought of The Fixer, but had put that away as likely to lead to something that was—queer. But when it finally came to a question of giving up the apartment, he sought Jeffreys. Spotty failed to find him at any of his old haunts, so he went to Barlton's office over the pawnbroker's shop. There he learned that Barlton had removed to a building on Park Row. Spotty hurried over to see if he could locate Jeffreys. He was amazed at what he found there. On the glass door was the lettering:

JOHN A. BARLTON
CONTRACTOR

Spotty went in and stood at a rail just inside the door. It was a large, well-lighted, well-furnished room, in which there were a half-dozen clerks. In the farther corner was a smaller office, with Barlton's name on the door. Alongside this office—seated at a square-topped desk—was Jeffreys, idly smoking a cigarette. Jeffreys saw Spotty and motioned to the boy to let him in. Without saying a word, Jeffreys heard Spotty, rose and passed into Barlton's office. He came back in a few minutes and indicated that Barlton would see Spotty. It was the same Barlton—sleek, fat, expensively dressed, looking as if he had just come from the barber's—but Spotty wasn't impressed as he had been in other days. There was a suggestion of the old furtive life behind all this show, and Spotty's standards were higher than formerly.

Barlton greeted him familiarly, and Spotty sat down.

"Well, Spotty, what can I do for you?"

"What's the business?" asked Spotty, looking about him in undisguised surprise.

"Contracting—general contracting."

"You must be making a lot of money."

"A little—but what are you after?"

Spotty stated his need of some kind of employment.

"What's the matter with the old business?" asked Barlton in a low voice.

Spotty knew what Barlton's contracting business was. He shook his head.

"I've been living respectable for five years, and I like it. I don't want any business where I know every straight dick wants to send me away and every crooked one wants to shake me down."

Barlton laughed loudly.

"And you—a river-pirate!"

"But I tell you I'm through with all that —now for five years."

"You want to join the Salvation Army— you'd look good in a suit."

"No, I don't," was the quick retort. "But for forty years I dodged the police, and I don't want any more of it. Besides, the children——"

"Can that!" said Barlton sharply. "Why, it's a fool law. Nobody follows a fool law. Spotty, if I didn't know you were all right, I'd throw you out as a reformer. But I'm going to show you."

Barlton reached in his desk, drew out a sheet of paper and handed it to Spotty.

"Look it over. There's a list of fellows— all top-notchers—who got caught shy of it, and I helped 'em out—with profit."

Spotty glanced over the list. There were more than a score of names—merchants, bankers, brokers, educators, lawyers and a clergyman.

"Do you want to call that kind of men crooks?"

"But I've seen most of these names in the papers—backing the law!" cried Spotty.

"Sure you have! And there's millions more of 'em—but they all buy it when they want it. Go to it. Tell everybody it's a good law—and I'll say it is. You get ten now for what used to sell for two. Think it over."

Spotty went out silently.

He deferred decision on Barlton's proposal for two weeks—not as a matter of principle, for he had not advanced far enough along the pathway of respectability to consider abstract moral principles. But the five years he had been free from the threat of the law had laid firm hold on him. He had learned to dread the old skulking life, with the police pack always ready to run him down. Still, he had to make a living, and the necessity was growing more acute daily. He went back to talk it over with Barlton. As he entered, he saw Barlton smile, but Barlton wasted no time in argument as to the law. He showed Spotty the profits in evading it, and before Spotty left the office, it was arranged that he should drive a taxi-cab and deliver packages, bags and trunks to persons whose names would be given to him by Barlton.

SPOTTY began his work the next day by delivering a wardrobe-trunk and a woman's hat-box to the janitor of an athletic club, a box of cough-medicine to a horse-doctor, and two cases of Scotch whisky marked "sacramental wine" at a newly organized church to a man in clerical garb whom he recognized as a former pickpocket.

When Spotty returned to Barlton's office, he still wore a look of astonishment.

"And I thought a river-pirate wasn't respectable!" was his only comment.

"Cheer up; you'll have a better line tomorrow," was Barlton's laughing rejoinder.

Spotty went home and found the family in a great state of excitement. Delphine had secured a place as a stenographer.

"Where is it?" asked Spotty.

"In the office of a revenue agent," said Delphine. "They have a lot of work now. There are so many bootleggers."

"I've heard that," said Spotty.

Delphine, in her excitement, went on quickly. Young Stanwood had been made an assistant agent and got her the appointment. When she finished, Spotty casually remarked,

"I got a job to-day—driving a taxi for Barlton."

"I knew it would come out all right!" exclaimed Delphine enthusiastically. "And, oh, how much better it all is than running that terrible saloon in Pell Street! Ugh!"

"That's all gone," replied Spotty. "It won't be near so bad for you now—even if somebody is mean enough to tell Stanwood."

"He knows about it," said Delphine.

"Who told him?"

"I did."

"You—when?"

"I didn't think it was right to let him come here so much—unless he knew. I told him all I knew—about our becoming—respectable."

Spotty looked at her in amazement. It was contrary to his lifelong habit to tell anybody anything against himself unless he was forced to do so. The fact that Delphine had told Stanwood made Spotty realize that she was on the other side—among the hunters that sought him—and the old instinct of caution prompted him to ask casually,

"What did he say?"

Delphine flushed.

"He said it was just like me and that the war had changed a lot of people in many ways, but that I really ought to get you out of it. I'm glad it's all past now."

Spotty heard this silently. He was thinking of a new danger—to Delphine. A single misstep of his, a slip of any of his associates would put him under surveillance, and the police would say that he had placed Delphine in the revenue office as a spy for Barlton. She would be dismissed at once, and even Stanwood would turn against her.

DELPHINE became intensely interested in the work of the revenue officers, and nightly entertained Spotty with stories of the wonderful sagacity of the agents in running down bootleggers. Nearly all his life, Spotty's point of view had been that of the outlaw. Now he was seeing things from the point of view of the police—just as if he were behind the scenes—and was able to understand and appreciate their triumphs. The name that most frequently occurred in Delphine's stories was "Jack Rann." Rann was always getting somebody in a spectacular way, and seemed to be the chief schemer in the revenue office. He made Spotty think of Jeffreys. Their cunning—on opposite sides—captivated Spotty.

But there were times when Delphine's stories were more disturbing than interesting to Spotty. Delphine usually concluded with a phrase of Rann's: "They may go for a time, but we get 'em in the end." Spotty knew that if Rann ever got him, he would probably be fined—but Delphine would lose everything she prized most highly.

This thought gave Spotty more concern than anything else in life. He was thinking of it when he crossed City Hall Park one morning from the Broadway subway and ran into Barlton talking earnestly to a thin, sallow young man in front of the mayor's office. Spotty looked keenly at the man. He had never seen him before. Barlton nodded to Spotty, and when he had gone a few yards, Spotty turned to look at them. They were looking after him as though they were discussing him. On reaching the office, Spotty walked to the desk of Jeffreys and said:

"Get busy, Fixer. I saw the boss in City Hall Park—he'll be here in a few moments."

"Talking to a slim young fellow?" asked Jeffreys, with a knowing smile.

"Yeah; a fellow with a face like a ferret I once owned." Jeffreys laughed. "Who is it? Put me wise."

"Don't give me away," began The Fixer. "That's Jack Rann, a revenooer."

Spotty started, and The Fixer went on:

"He's all right. I wouldn't tell this to anybody but you, Spotty," said The Fixer, and, with the vanity that accompanies cunning, he continued: "I fixed that meetin'—just by chance—in front of the mayor's office. They're framin' a pedler—out of town. He run out on Barlton, and Barlton's givin' him up to Rann. Barlton's in so strong he can give up anybody he sours on. And he gets somethin' on everybody he plays with—I'll bet he's got somethin' on me and you. Look for a story in the papers of a man sellin' a daily drink before lunch to some business men from hot-water bags under his shirt. I fix these things—and Rann gets all the noise."

Spotty laughed. The Fixer looked at him questioningly.

"Won't the pedler squeal?"

"What good will that do him? Rann will hear of it first and tip Barlton—then I'll fix an alibi—twenty man-power, if he wants that many. Slick? I'll say it is." The Fixer chuckled.

Barlton came in briskly. He sent for The Fixer at once, conversed with him briefly and then sent for Spotty. Barlton instructed Spotty to take two carboys of embalming fluid to a university town and deliver them to an undertaker.

"The 'rah-'rah boys need a drink now and then," said Barlton, with a laugh.

Spotty's instructions were minute as to train, time and delivery. He had hardly taken his seat in the smoking-car when Rann entered and sat down beside him. He recalled The Fixer's words that Barlton protected himself by putting everybody where this ferret could get him when Barlton slipped the chain. The thought made Spotty uncomfortable for a moment, but Rann affably began to talk about the sporting news of the day. The knowledge that he knew what Rann's errand was made Spotty wonder if Rann knew about the embalming fluid.

An hour later, Rann got off the train and Spotty continued his journey. He was unable to get back to the city before the office closed, so he took the money home with him. He found Delphine eagerly awaiting his arrival.

"I've got a good story to tell you to-night!" she cried. "Jack Rann—he always gets the man he goes after——"

And Delphine, with flushed face and glistening eyes, told the story of the capture of the pedler as Rann told it, but without mentioning The Fixer's part. As she finished, the door-bell rang, and she went to the door, expecting Stanwood. She returned immediately to announce that Mr. Barlton was in the reception-room. Spotty was surprised at Barlton's coming for the money, but hastened to him.

"Who's the girl, Spotty?" was Barlton's greeting.

"My daughter."

"What's she do?"

"Stenog."

"Where?"

Spotty hesitated a moment.

"Brownlow's office."

"What! Get her out—quick! Listen; I'll give her a job—twenty-five dollars."

Spotty was silent a moment. Rann had told Barlton about Delphine. That was why he came for his money.

"I'll see what she thinks about it," said Spotty slowly.

WHEN Spotty told Barlton the next day that Delphine had declined his offer, Barlton became angry.

"What do you want to do—blow the game?" he cried.

Spotty saw the danger of quarreling with a man who gave men up as he pleased, and attempted to mollify Barlton with the explanation that the girl liked her place and wouldn't give it up. Barlton expressed a wish to call at Spotty's home that evening and talk it over, and, though Spotty protested that it would be of no use, Barlton called early. When Delphine was called into the room by her father, Barlton rushed to her and, with an assured air, said:

"Your father tells me you are an A 1 stenog. I need one badly just now—fifty a week—light work—short hours. What do you say?" Delphine stepped back and shook her head. "Now, now, Miss Delphine, don't turn down a good thing without looking it over. I've got two tickets for a first-class show. Suppose you and I go to see it and talk things over."

Delphine glared at him.

"No, thank you. I don't care to discuss it. Good-evening."

The girl turned abruptly and left the room. Barlton stared after her. With a light laugh, he turned to Spotty.

"Well, that settles it—now. Does she know what you're doing?"

"No; she thinks I'm driving a taxi."

"She won't think that long. She's too smart. We'll have to get her out of that job—or you and me'll split."

The covert threat in Barlton's tone was not lost on Spotty. He saw Barlton to the door and went back to the kitchen.

"You did right to turn him down, but you were rough about it," he said.

Delphine looked at her father keenly.

"I don't like his eyes—too small, too cunning, too close together—and his way—showed he was not used to talking to nice women. Fifty dollars—" Delphine stopped and flushed crimson. "Oh, *mon père*," she cried in distress, "don't you understand what he—meant?"

Spotty did now, clearly. He must watch carefully, for Barlton was relentless in such pursuits. But what if Barlton gave him up to Rann? They—with his record—could send him away, and then——

"His whole manner showed he wasn't respectable," continued the girl.

The word "respectable" brought back a flood of memories to Spotty. The ease with which, in his present occupation, he was able to evade the law, the sort of men who were his partners in the evasions had led him to forget his old troubles with the police. A single slip— The prospect brought back all the old feeling he had after he threw Giuseppe's body in the water.

"Why don't you get a taxi of your own?" asked Delphine.

"I never thought of that—it costs a good deal."

"I've saved a hundred!" said the girl eagerly. "We can cut down our living and soon get enough. A taxi ought to pay well now."

Spotty considered the suggestion a moment in silence; then he decided to talk it over with her—cautiously. He began by speaking of the number of fares he was forced to refuse each day going up Fifth Avenue.

"I always go up Fifth Avenue when I can. I like to see the crowds," he said.

"You always were gregarious—that's the French of you," replied Delphine, smiling.

"Gree—what?"

Delphine explained the word. Spotty laughed with pleasure. There was no end to what the girl had learned at the commercial college. He decided to tell her at once that he disliked Barlton and wanted to get away from him; but before he began, Delphine questioned sharply,

"Has Barlton any other business than taxi-cabs?"

Spotty changed his mind. He remembered again that it was the business of all those working for the government to catch him, and Delphine—well, she was working for the government, and how was he to know—with her queer ideas—that she might not think that she had to tell Brownlow about Barlton, as she had told Stanwood about the saloon in Pell Street even when she dreaded that the telling might cause him never to see her again? Spotty turned this over quickly—that would make him an informer. He evaded the question by saying:

"I can't ask him that. But I'll think about getting a taxi of my own."

Spotty went to his room to think. He came to the conclusion that what Delphine had proposed was the way out for him. For there was danger—on all sides. He recalled his six deliveries for that day—a well-known politician, a celebrated musician, an eminent lawyer, a judge, a reformer and a welfare worker. They all gave excuses with a grin. It—everybody called what he delivered to them "it"—was needed for medicine, for cooking or as a guard against illness. It was only a question of time when one of this sort of men would talk too much and gain immunity by sacrificing him.

"I've got to quit—soon," he muttered.

Upon a sheet of paper he took from his pocket, Spotty laboriously figured up the cost of getting a taxi-cab. Toward morning he decided that with Delphine's hundred he could raise enough in two weeks' time. He sat still a moment, lost in thought.

"It's funny," he mused, "when you come to think of the way things happen. It was old Jean-Jacques running the blockade that made us Lafittes river-pirates. I'm wondering what's going to happen to all these young fellows when they get the habit of breaking the law fastened on them. Will they all be crooks whenever they feel like it?"

SPOTTY made all his arrangements for getting his cab quietly, following his lifelong habit of secrecy. On the day he paid his first instalment, he went back to Barlton's office in high good humor. In four days he would be out. The Fixer upset his dream of security.

"Spotty, Barlton's gone on that girl of yours," he said, with a grin.

"She's not gone on him," growled Spotty savagely.

The Fixer laughed.

"He gets what he goes after. I'll bet she's workin' here inside a month."

Spotty checked an angry retort. The boy told him Barlton wanted to see him, and Spotty went to the inner office, determined to resent, physically, if necessary, anything Barlton might say as to Delphine. The Fixer's words still rankled, but Barlton greeted Spotty quietly.

"Spotty, everything is going fine. I'm going to raise you next week. You're worth it," he said jovially.

Spotty was abashed for a moment. He was on the point of saying he was going to get out, but refrained and expressed his thanks. Barlton handed him the assignment for the day. Spotty took the list and went out. Barlton called for The Fixer.

"Close the door," said Barlton sharply.

The Fixer closed it, and Barlton, in a burst of rage, spent the next five minutes cursing the ambition of Spotty.

"He's fixing to quit. I got it straight."

"How straight?"

"Rann. He's going to be respectable—him, a river-thief—and that stuck-up flapper of his," went on Barlton savagely. "Going to marry Stanwood—of the revenue office. He's buying a taxi-cab right now." The Fixer grinned. "What are you grinning about? How long will it be before Stanwood knows all that Spotty knows. And where'll you be—playing checkers with your nose. I guess not! I'll fix him all right."

"I ain't goin' to frame Spotty and the girl—she's a good girl," said The Fixer sullenly.

"Are you aiming to be respectable, too?"

"No," returned The Fixer, resentfully; "but let 'em go, I say."

"Spotty knows too much—all our ways. Think what he could get on you," went on Barlton shrewdly. "Well, he won't. I'll call Spotty a crook before he can call me one. And I'll fix it so Stanwood will have to throw the girl down—and out of the office. We won't be safe till we do."

"What are you goin' to do to the girl?"

"I'll treat her right—liberal."

"Spotty'll croak you—he's a bad one."

"I've handled 'em tougher than Spotty Lafitte—and got away with it." Barlton leaned forward and whispered to The Fixer, who slowly grinned.

"That's slick—to give him up that way," he said, in a low voice.

"Tell Rann I want to see him in front of the mayor's office at nine to-morrow."

The Fixer rose and went out at once.

When Spotty arrived the next day, Barlton greeted him as pleasantly as he had the day before.

"Not much doing to-day, Spotty. I've got an easy one here. Go to Marvin's express agency at eleven and get a steamer-trunk. Deliver it to — East Thirty-seventh Street. Be there exactly at eleven-thirty. The janitor—a tall, red-headed man—will take it in. After that, spend the day on the Avenue picking up fares. If I want you, I'll send a boy up for you. We'll split the fares—fifty-fifty."

Spotty went out happily.

As he passed The Fixer's desk, he stopped and said,

"I'm going to spend the day on the Avenue—and split fares with Barlton."

"Easy money," said The Fixer. "You and I ought to get taxis of our own—there's money in it."

"I don't know about that," said Spotty cautiously, and passed out.

The Fixer went to Barlton's office.

"I says to him we ought to get taxis of our own," said Jeffreys, "and he was that foxy I could see it was right."

"Jack never misses anything—the girl dropped it," replied Barlton. "But I guess not, Mr. Spotty—I guess not."

Barlton laughed, and The Fixer smiled.

GEORGE R. BROWNLOW, of the revenue office, skimmed over the morning mail, touched a bell, and Delphine Lafitte, note-book in hand, came quickly into his office. She sat down beside his desk, drew out the shelf, looked at the clock, marked "10:05" at the top of the page and waited. Brownlow—quick of motion, keen, gray-eyed—wasted no time in preliminaries but began at once. As he finished his third letter, Rann came in. Brownlow looked up.

"Well, Jack?"

"Chief, I'm going out on this case," he said, handing Brownlow a slip of paper. "I don't think it's much—but we've got to get 'em all."

Brownlow read the slip, and Delphine smiled at Rann.

"Who are you going to take with you?" asked Brownlow.

"Stanwood."

"Good! He's safe. At least, he doesn't talk as much as you do."

Rann grinned and went out. Brownlow put the slip down on his desk, picked it up after a moment and said,

"I guess we had better file this."

He handed the slip to Delphine, and she went to the filing-case. There, she looked at it to get the filing-letter—and turned cold as she read the slip through.

> Chauffeur for well-known contractor, John A. Barlton, will deliver trunk of whisky at — East Thirty-seventh Street at 11:30. Side-line of his own. Short, thick-set man, marked with smallpox. Couldn't get his name.

Delphine put the slip in compartment "B." White and trembling, she dragged her heavy feet back to her seat and sank down. She looked up at the clock; it was ten-thirty.

"Where was I— Why, what's the matter with you? Are you ill?" asked Brownlow, looking at her.

"I don't feel well—I must get some air."

"I'm sorry. I didn't notice it before. Go home. I'll call one of the other girls."

Delphine went to the outer office, hastily put on her hat and coat and passed to the corridor. In the distance, waiting for an elevator, she saw Rann—from whom few escaped—standing with his arm over Stanwood's shoulder, talking and laughing gaily. Rann stopped suddenly, looked furtively at her, pushed Stanwood into the elevator as the door opened and followed him in.

Delphine waited for the next car.

Spotty was having a pleasant time on the Avenue, picking up a short-rider here and there, and slowly working his way downtown. His success argued well for his venture—next week. On reaching Tenth Street, he turned eastward to get the trunk at Marvin's. He passed in front of a 'bus and saw Rann and Stanwood in a front seat on top. Stanwood waved his hand; Spotty laughingly nodded and went on to Marvin's, reaching there at a few minutes before eleven. Then he went back to Fifth Avenue and joined the procession moving up-town. He was not due at Thirty-seventh Street until eleven-thirty, and he felt sure he had ample time.

Just before he reached Thirty-third Street, Spotty looked at his watch. He had eight minutes, and if he got across Thirty-fourth Street, he would be just in time. But he didn't. The green light flashed, signaling the traffic on Fifth Avenue to halt and allow that on Thirty-fourth Street to pass over. He waited impatiently for the yellow light to direct the resumption of traffic on the avenue. Presently the green light gave way to the red light—the warning that the yellow light would follow in an instant. Suddenly he heard,

"*Mon père!*"

Startled, Spotty turned and saw Delphine.

"Turn east on Thirty-fourth Street!" she cried. "You must—you must!"

With both hands she pulled open the door of the cab and scrambled in.

Spotty knew that something was wrong—the look on Delphine's face told him that. He turned into Thirty-fourth and ran to the curb near Park Avenue. He got down and thrust his head into the cab.

"What is it?" he asked, anxiously.

"Rann is waiting for you and the trunk at — East Thirty-seventh Street," she said excitedly. "Oh, how could you?"

"How did you find out?" demanded Spotty sharply.

"Rann gave Mr. Brownlow a slip that said a driver for Barlton was delivering on his own account—I knew you would go up Fifth Avenue—" Delphine stopped with a sob.

Spotty saw it all. Barlton had given him up to Rann, and Spotty knew that between the two they could produce witnesses to prove anything. He must get rid of the trunk—that was sure. He opened the door; Delphine stepped to the sidewalk, and, touching his cap, Spotty leaped to his seat and drove eastward. He saw his danger clearly. As soon as Rann made up his mind that the trunk would not be delivered, he would step to a telephone and call for the aid of the police. The marks—from which he derived the name "Spotty"—would make identification easy for even the newest policeman. He couldn't go to the garage. That would be watched. He decided to cross over to Williamsburg. He knew a man there who would take the trunk for its contents, and he must reach him before the police were warned. On approaching Third Avenue, he saw with dismay a heavily laden truck coming down the avenue. To be delayed would mean much. He determined to make an attempt to cross over in front of the truck. He tried—and failed. The truck crashed into the cab, smashing it, and hurling Spotty and his trunk against a pillar of the Third Avenue elevated.

Spotty lay unconscious in the middle of the street, amid the contents of the trunk strewn along the car-tracks.

It had contained nothing but clothing!

A crowd gathered quickly about the unconscious man, and here and there a boy, attracted by the accident, furtively picked up some article and skulked away. A policeman appeared, called an ambulance, and Spotty was taken to the hospital.

DELPHINE looked after her father as he crossed the crest of the hill at Park Avenue and started eastward. He had escaped this time, but her grief at his duplicity shook her. She determined that there must be an understanding that night. She wondered if Rann had told Theodore that the man they were after was her father. Of one thing she was certain: She must tell Theodore and get another place.

When Delphine reached her desk, she looked about her cautiously and noticed that Rann and Stanwood had not returned. Nervously she watched the door until Brownlow summoned her for the afternoon letters.

"Feeling better?" he asked kindly.

"Yes, thank you," replied Delphine, looking at the clock and marking "1:30" at the top of her book.

Brownlow began abruptly as usual, and had dictated half a dozen letters when Stanwood came in. Brownlow paused and looked up.

"What luck?"

"Looks like a dream to me," said Stanwood, laughing. "He was most mysterious about it, assuring me that he was going to give me the surprise of my young life. When the man failed to show up with the trunk, we went to a hotel and he wrote this note for you. He said he was going to see the man who gave him the tip."

Stanwood passed over a sealed note. Delphine sighed with relief. At least she could tell Theodore herself. Brownlow opened the letter, started, and said to Stanwood,

"Do you know what is in this note?"

Delphine shivered—she knew.

"Not the slightest idea. Rann's usual alibi when he fails, I suppose."

"I'll talk to you later about it," said Brownlow. "Go now."

When Stanwood passed from the room, Brownlow looked steadily at Delphine for a full moment. His keen gray eyes narrowed, and Delphine felt herself growing colder.

"Where did you go when you went out this morning?" he asked, slowly.

"It was—my father," she said in a low voice.

Brownlow opened his eyes in surprise. He had expected a flood of tears or a lie of some kind. He was not accustomed to frank statements in connection with violations of the Volstead Act. There were always sweeping denials or flippant jests. Brownlow reached for the note Rann had sent him and handed it to Delphine. She trembled as she read it.

Driver of taxi was Spotty Lafitte. Somebody tipped him.

"I couldn't help it," she said weakly. "I didn't know he was doing it—until I read the note to get the letter for filing."

Brownlow thought a moment.

"This is a very serious matter—for you," he said slowly. "Put your book down—never mind the letters. I will have to think over what I shall do."

The door opened quickly and Rann rushed in. His sallow face was ashen. He looked at Delphine stealthily, leaned over and whispered to Brownlow,

"Chief, I got to see you alone for a minute."

"Miss Lafitte, go to your desk, and I will——"

"No; let her stay—but come over here."

Brownlow followed Rann to the other side of the room.

"Chief, somebody was playing a joke on me and Spotty Lafitte," said Rann nervously. "There wasn't any booze in his trunk; but a truck bumped into him on Third Avenue and broke his back."

"Heavens!" cried Brownlow. "How——"

Rann nodded in the direction of Delphine.

"Make Stanwood tell her—they're engaged."

Brownlow hastily led Rann into the outer office. In a few minutes Stanwood came in and sat down at Brownlow's desk. Delphine looked at him in terror. After a moment of suspense he told her some one—some enemy of her father's—had informed Rann, in a joke, that her father was selling illegal goods on his own account, using Barlton's cab—that it was a lie.

"A lie?" cried Delphine.

"The trunk contained nothing but old clothes."

Delphine broke into a wild, hysterical laugh, and Stanwood waited until she grew calmer. Then, in a broken, tearful way, she asked,

"How did they find it out?"

Stanwood pulled himself together.

"A truck ran into him and smashed——"

"Was my father hurt?" asked the girl, rising.

"He is in the—hospital."

"It's all my fault. I was too suspicious—too hard. I was the first to believe the lie." Delphine dropped in her chair, put her head down on her desk and shook with sobs.

"You go home now," said Stanwood, with feeling. "I'll go see how he is and come up and tell you as soon as I can."

"No, no! I'm the one to go!" cried Delphine, rising quickly.

Stanwood went to the door, and Brownlow came back with him.

"Miss Lafitte," began Brownlow, with contrition, "I can't tell you how sorry I am that I—that we all—misjudged——"

"Oh, that is nothing now!" exclaimed Delphine. "But I must go——"

"Go with her, Stanwood."

Half an hour later, Delphine and Stanwood reached the hospital. The interne said her father had been asking constantly for her and took them to the bedside. Delphine leaned over Spotty and sobbingly told him it was all her fault. If she had only believed in him more, it would never have happened. She repeated this again and again, and Spotty was greatly moved by her distress.

The old river-pirate was puzzled. He knew he had been framed—the relations of Rann and Barlton proved that—but he couldn't understand the game as it was played. Why did Rann leave his name off the slip? Why did they arrange to have him arrested with a trunk of old clothes? But these became minor questions now. The main one was Delphine leaning over him, breaking with sobs and accusing herself with the old, endearing "*Mon père.*" It was too much for Spotty. Anything but to have her think that! He must say something to make her know it wasn't her fault. He motioned the others to step back and whispered to the girl:

"You done right. I changed the trunk before I was struck—so it would all be respectable. Don't tell any one."

Delphine looked at him in dumb surprise.

SPOTTY lingered for a week. Just before the end, he asked Stanwood to bring The Fixer to see him. Delphine and the other members of the family were there waiting. Spotty motioned all of them away so that he might talk to The Fixer alone.

"What was I doing with a trunk of old clothes? I thought the trunk was full of *it*—like always."

The Fixer whispered steadily for five minutes. Spotty listened in silence. All the old cunning of the river came back to him. He recalled that he had thought Delphine was foolish when she told Stanwood things she didn't have to tell, but it proved much better for her when she left nothing for him to find out in some other way. Spotty raised a thin white hand and beckoned Stanwood. The others all moved forward, but he indicated that he only wanted Stanwood.

"You and Delphine are planning to get married—soon?" Stanwood nodded. "She told you a lot about me—it didn't change you, and nothing I can say will change it now?"

"No," said Stanwood.

"Tell him, Fixer. He's all right."

"It was a set-up," began The Fixer. "Barlton found out Spotty was goin' to quit, and he wanted to get Delphine away from you. He fixed it with Rann to have you arrest Spotty. He figured you'd learn Spotty's record and throw the girl down. Then, when the trunk showed nothin' but old clothes, he was goin' to make a holler about the police houndin' a man he was tryin' to reform, and get a grip on Spotty and the girl. It sounded slick, but it went wrong when the girl got the tip and butted in. You always slip—when you run double. I quit him."

Spotty motioned for Delphine, and the girl came and stood by Stanwood, waiting for her father to speak, but he spoke to Stanwood.

"You tell her what you think best—sometime."

And Spotty smiled as he saw them standing there before him, for out of his mean and sordid surroundings, and in spite of his grotesque standards, he had won a true respectability for Delphine at last.

"In two more days, I'd 'a' had my own taxi and beat 'em both. Let me get some sleep—now," he said wearily.

Stanwood kept his word, though he told Spotty's story in his own way. And he did more. In the patois of The Fixer, he "got Barlton and Rann," and "got 'em" in such a way that each believed the other had given him up—a game that highly appealed to such an artist in fixing as The Fixer.

The Cuckoo Who Went to Jail

Now, How Did the Cuckoo First Get into the Clock? The Fantastic yet Fascinating Explanation of a Gifted Author Who Is New to Everybody's

By Coulson Kernahan

THE first aeroplane to come that way had just hummed by in the blue zenith; and though the Cuckoo and his wife, especially his wife, were consistently "cut" as "impossibles" in all self-respecting bird circles, as yet no staid bird dowager had frigidly withdrawn, to sail away on scornful wing, when the Cuckoo had put in a word at the conference which, in their first alarm, the birds had summoned.

The danger was now, however, over, for the aeroplane was hull down on the horizon, and, recalled thus to the proprieties, more than one bird was looking askance at the Cuckoo who, though he ought to have known that the time had come in which to efface himself, was still talking.

"It must have been a bird," he said, "for butterflies flutter, dragon-flies flit, bees and wasps buzz, and other insects go about their business in the air, just above or not far from the ground. But we birds are the only creatures who may be said to fly, in the sense of boldly launching ourselves into or cleaving space, like the strange bird creature which has just gone by."

Even the Dove who, for all her gentleness, is very particular about the company she keeps, ruffled her wing-feathers uneasily at the Cuckoo's tacit claim to be "one of themselves" when he had used the words: "we birds." The Dove was, however, too shy to put him in his place. Not so the Blackbird. He always falls to scolding the world at large when startled; and though badly startled by the aeroplane, his alarm had caused him thus far to keep a still tongue in his head.

Even now, he was too shaken in nerve to raise his voice to his usual high-pitched scold, but that did not prevent him from being nasty.

"I don't call your furtive way of slinking about 'flying,' " he said to the Cuckoo. " 'Slink' is an ugly word to apply to bird-flight, which is the most graceful, beautiful and distinguished of all movements. But, then, you are the one discreditable member of the bird tribe. You haven't even what men folk call 'a local habitation and a name,' as names go. That, no doubt, is how Adam came to overlook you when taking a census of respectable bird householders for naming purposes. You are not a name; you are merely a nuisance, known only by the horrid noise you make—a sort of street-cry, as it were, in our beautiful bird-streets of lane and hedgerow. You are, indeed, like the man thief of whom we have heard human beings speak as going about pretending to cry a trade, pretending to be ready to buy rags and refuse, but really on the lookout for what he may pick up or pilfer. If there were such a thing as a bird police force, you would have been hauled off to jail long ago, under the Rogue-and-Vagrant Act. It is quite true that you ape your betters by going abroad to the south of France or some other fashionable wintering-place, but I expect that even there you lead a disreputable life, making a sort of flying advertisement of yourself, like a noisy hawker hawking his wares, though what *you* gave got to hawk—I wish to goodness the hawk had got *you*—except stolen eggs would puzzle any one to know."

THE Cuckoo did not condescend to answer, but dropped, wings closed—like a rude boy who slouches away, hands thrust carelessly into pockets, to let you know that he has paid no attention to a word you have said to him for his own good—from his perch on a tree-top. I saw him sliding low through the air over a plowed field. Then he planed upward into a green mist between some branches, threw over his shoulder a mocking "Cuckoo!" and was gone. Half a minute later, like a muffled flute blown by fairy lips within a drum, a faint and hollow echo of his cry was borne to us from a far hill.

"As a home-keeping bird, living happily with my husband," said the Dove, "I disapprove entirely of the Cuckoo's household arrangements and irregular life. But I wish to be charitable, and in justice to him we ought to remember that he is very unfortunate in his wife. Who knows but that if he had had a good wife, making his home bright and happy, bringing up her children herself instead of"—here the Dove drew a wing over her head, which is the bird equivalent to blushing—"instead of leaving them at other folks' doors—who knows, if he had had another sort of wife, that the Cuckoo might not have been a very different bird?"

The Dove, who generally confines her remarks to "Croo-roo-roo," and then addresses herself only to her husband, was quite out of breath and very fluttered by so long a speech.

"I always feel," she went on sadly, when she got back her breath, "that the Cuckoo must be a very lonely bird—no home, no wife, no children that he can rightly call his own. Perhaps it is because he has such disreputable belongings that he drifts about—more like a floating scrap of cloud than a living and feathered bird. Aimlessly he flits from place to place and from tree to tree, ashamed, as it were, to show his face; for it *is* generally only the tail-end of him—and then only as he is disappearing—that we see. I am sure he is not happy, though he does sing, if sing it can be called, as he flies. We birds, when suddenly wakened or in pain, trill, some of us, a brief stave of song that means not gladness but possibly only terror or grief, and that singular sound which the Cuckoo utters always seems to me inexpressibly sad. Poor, lonely Cuckoo! For all his wickedness, I cannot but be sorry for him."

The Starling who, like some one tuning a banjo, had been making sharp little noises which sounded like "Glit! Glit!" but may have been meant for "Tut! Tut!" now broke in impatiently.

"Slit my tongue!" he exclaimed, for he is often slangy, and as cheeky as a street Arab, much more so than what is called the "common sparrow," who is "common" only in the matter of numbers. There being so many of them, every sparrow has to stand up and fight for himself, and so may be pugnacious, but he is never "common" in his speech or ways, which the leering, jeering, sneering House Starling generally is.

"Split my tongue, old thing," wheezed the Starling, "but how you do slop the sentiment about! 'Poor, lonely Cuckoo' indeed! He is only lonely—he will see to that, for he is calling, 'Come and kiss me!' all day, and sometimes quite late into the night—when he is up to wickedness, which he is wise enough to let no other eye, not even his wife's, witness, lest she turn king's evidence against him some day. 'Lonely!' I wish I were half as lonely as he. Why, the Cuckoo has the merriest and best time of all the birds! Life is one long honeymoon with him, and no house to build, no brood to feed and rear, and so with none of the many home cares which turn some of us gray."

"Cease your ribald gibberings, sir!" rebuked Choirmaster Thrush, who very much resents that so little an "other-worldly," not to say so wickedly this-wordly a bird as the Jackdaw should don clerical attire and live in a church. I have indeed heard it whispered that the Thrush's ambition was to become a bird clergyman, and that although he never got higher than choirmaster, he is very much inclined to fancy that his perch on the tree-top is a pulpit, and that a very large congregation hangs upon every note of his song-sermon. Except for a pardonable weakness for snails—just as some excellent folk, including clergymen, cannot say "No" to an oyster—Choirmaster Thrush is one of the most well-conducted and orderly-living of the feathered tribe.

"My sympathies," continued Choirmaster Thrush—and by the way he spoke you might really have thought him to be a bird clergyman—"are all with good Mistress Dove in her wish to be charitable. But there is no disguising the fact that the Cuckoos, husband and wife—for he is not only fully cognizant of, but is an accomplice in his wife's evil deeds—have a nefarious record. Good Mistress Dove must be reminded that her home has not suffered, as the homes of some of us have—ask Mr. and Mrs. Meadow Pippit, or Mr. and Mrs. Hedge Sparrow—under the beaks of this evil-doing pair. It is not that they palm off their own eggs upon other people as theirs (the other people's) own, and so shift upon others the burden of finding food for Cuckoo nestlings; of teaching Cuckoo children their 'a' for air, above, around, adown; 'b' for bird, beautiful, buoyant, balanced; 'c' for cat, cruel, cunning, clawed, and so on, as well as of training Cuckoo children to fly. That is a fraud which is bad enough in itself, but to commit that fraud, they first of all commit an act of burglary. They do worse than housebreak and burgle, for they carry away, to kill and to destroy, some of the poor, deceived bird-parents' egg-children. And such criminals by nature are the whole Cuckoo tribe that the young Cuckoo, when hatched, rewards his kind foster-parents for all their affection and care by casting their foster-parents' own innocent offspring out of the nest, to die a miserable death by cats or by exposure—and that is t-t-tantamount to m-m-*m*-murder!"

His feelings too much for him, Choirmaster Thrush's voice throbbed into a deep, long-drawn and sobbing "jug, jug, jug," almost as liquid and lovely as the nightingale's.

Perhaps it was that brief stave of song to which, so the Dove had said, birds suddenly wakened or in pain give utterance.

In any case, Choirmaster Thrush had, the next moment, the best of causes to be both surprised and alarmed, for a gruff and deep voice broke in behind his very ear.

It was old Judge Owl, who, unseen and unsuspected, had been listening to the whole bird conference from the hollow place in the tree where he had been taking a nap.

When he spoke, the other birds nearly jumped out of their feathers with fright.

"The verdict of this court is," said the Owl, "that the Cuckoo be taken by the beak to the place in Switzerland where they make clocks, and there be imprisoned in a clock, and allowed to come outside for exercise only for a few seconds in every hour and half-hour for the rest of his natural life."

Then—the impudence of it!—right under the Owl's very nose, and as if to say, "You have got to catch him first," rang out a mocking: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"Do your duty, sir, and seize the prisoner," commanded the Owl sternly, addressing himself directly and, to my consternation, to me.

So completely screened in, around, above, beneath by thick foliage, was the little arbor high up in the tree where, all this time, I had lain hidden, that I did not suppose the Owl could see me, for none of the other birds had done so.

BUT when he ordered me to do my duty by arresting the Cuckoo, I rose to obey, missed my footing among the branches, and fell—not out of a tree but out of the bed in which I had been sleeping and dreaming, and just in time to hear and to see the cuckoo in the "wag at the wall" clock, which I had brought with me from Switzerland, call out: "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" nod his head, flap his wings derisively at me and slip back behind the little door, which closed after him with a snap.

But I have wondered sometimes since, whether, long, long ago, something not unlike what I saw and heard in my dream really happened, and, if so, whether it may not be the explanation of how the cuckoo first got into the clock.

Everybody's Magazine, October, 1922

Photographs by White Studio

Fanny Hawthorn (Eileen Huban) explains to *Alan Jeffcote* (Gordon Ash) why she will not marry him, in spite of the situation on which this interesting play is based. "Don't kid yourself, my lad," she says. "It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling *your* life, but because I'm afraid of spoiling *mine*. . . . The chap Fanny Hawthorn weds has got to be made of different stuff from you, my lad."

Fanny Hawthorn

An Absorbing and Significant Play That Has Been a Substantial Success Both in London and in New York

By Stanley Houghton

Published by courtesy of the Vanderbilt Producing Company

HINDLE is one of the prosperous manufacturing towns of Lancashire—cotton goods being its chief product. Lancashire is the backbone of English industry, and its people have great county pride. They are inclined to look upon London as a place where rich Lancashire men go for a spree if they have not time to go to Monte Carlo or Paris. Here *Christopher Hawthorn* and *Nathaniel Jeffcote* started out together as weavers some forty years ago. *Christopher* is a gentle soul, lacking the ambition and drive that have sent *Jeffcote* ahead, and to-day he is working at the loom in Daisy Bank Mill, which is now owned by *Nathaniel.* But as master and man they still remain friends, for *Jeffcote* is not one to forget associates of his less prosperous days.

To-night the *Hawthorns* are in a state of great disturbance. They have just discovered that *Fanny,* their daughter, has spent the week-end at Llandudno with *Alan Jeffcote, Nathaniel's* son. She went away with Mary Hollins, but Mary was drowned at Blackpool, and it was in this way that they learned about *Fanny* and *Alan.*

Gentle old *Christopher* is terribly broken up. His wife, a bitter-tongued, shrewish woman, is more angry than hurt. Her rapacity soon asserts itself, however, and her second thought is that now they can perhaps force an alliance between themselves and the rich *Jeffcotes.* She is furious at *Fanny's* indifference, and especially when *Fanny* says that she didn't ask *Alan* to marry her. *Mrs. Hawthorn* insists that her husband go up to the *Jeffcotes'* to-night, and she warns him not to be too soft.

After hearing the story, *Jeffcote* sends *Christopher* away, telling him to return the next night with his wife and *Fanny. Nathaniel* has a harsh code, but learning that his son is the offender has not altered his idea of what is due *Fanny* and her parents. He has made up his mind that *Alan* shall marry the girl.

Alan Jeffcote is a pleasant, easy-going fellow. He stumbles in after midnight, a bit the worse for liquor. He stamps round the library noisily, and presently his father stalks in. *Alan* makes amiable reference to his condition, but *Jeffcote* is in no mood for pleasantry.

JEFFCOTE: Thou cursed young fool! I could find it in my heart to take a strap to thee—so I could. Why hadn't thou the sense to pay for thy pleasures, instead of getting mixed up with a straight girl? I've never kept thee short of brass. And if thou must have a straight girl, thou might have kept off one from the mill. Let alone her father's one of my oldest friends.

ALAN: What's going to be done?

JEFFCOTE: I said I'd see him treated right.

ALAN (*brightening*): What'll they take?

JEFFCOTE (*dangerously*): I said I'd see them treated *right.* If thou expects I'm going to square it with a check and that thou's going to slip away scot-free, thou's sadly mistaken. Thou's going to wed the lass.

ALAN: But I cannot! You know—Beatrice—I can't!

JEFFCOTE: Thou mun tell Beatrice it's off.

ALAN: Father, I don't want to wed Fanny! I want to wed Beatrice.

JEFFCOTE: Dost thou love Beatrice?

ALAN: Yes.

JEFFCOTE: I'm glad of it. It's right that thou should suffer as well as her.

ALAN: It's me that's got to go through it. It doesn't hurt thee if I wed Fanny Hawthorn.

JEFFCOTE: So you think it easy for me to see thee wed Fanny Hawthorn? Hearken! Dost thou know how I began life? Dost thou know that I started as tenter in Walmesley's shed when I were eight years of age, and that, when the time comes, I shall leave the biggest fortune ever made in the cotton trade in Hindle? Dost know what my thought has been when laboring these thirty years to get all that brass together? Not what pleasure I could get out of spending, but what power and influence I were piling up the while. I was set on founding a great firm that would be famous not only all over Lancashire but all over the world. Dost thou think as I weren't right glad when thou goes and gets engaged to Tim Farrar's lass? Tim Farrar, as were mayor of Hindle and got knighted when the king come to open the new town hall—Tim Farrar that owns Lane End Shed, next biggest place to Daisy Bank in Hindle. Why, it were the dearest wish of my heart to see thee wed Tim Farrar's lass—and, happen, to see thee running both mills afore I died. And now what falls out? Lad as I'd looked to keep on the tradition and build the business bigger still goes and weds one of my own weavers! Dost think that's no disappointment to me? Hearken! I'd put down ten thousand quid if thou could honestly wed Beatrice Farrar. But thou can't honestly wed her, not if I put down a million. There's only one lass thou can honestly wed now, and that's Fanny Hawthorn, and, by God, I'm going to see that thou does it!

MRS. JEFFCOTE is overcome when her husband breaks the news to her—not so much at *Alan's* transgression—she is tenderly lenient toward her son—but at *Nathaniel's* decision that he must marry *Fanny*. She considers that *Fanny* is not good enough to marry *Alan*, and says that he shall not if she can stop it. "But, you can't, old lass," says her husband. "I wear the breeches in this house."

The *Farrars* are announced. His wife tells *Beatrice*, while he breaks the news to *Sir Timothy*.

Sir Timothy thinks that *Nathaniel's* ideas of friendship and honor are quixotic. So when *Alan* defies his father, *Sir Timothy* backs him up. But *Nathaniel* has a powerful weapon in his hand—his money. He threatens—and *Alan* knows it is not idle—to leave every farthing to his nephew if *Alan* refuses to do his duty by *Fanny*.

ALAN: Very well. Leave it to Travis. I'm going to stick to Beatrice if she'll have me. You can cut us off with a shilling if you've a mind to—both of you.

He feels quite certain of *Beatrice*. She loves him too much to give him up. And she will admire the way he stood up to his father and hers, and be willing to face poverty for a few years. They call her in, and the two old men go out and leave them together. *Alan* pleads hard, searching for the arguments which he thinks will appeal most to her.

ALAN: It was just a lark. I'm ashamed of myself, just as I should be if you caught me drunk. I can't defend myself. I feel just an utter swine. What I felt for Fanny was simply base—horrible——

BEATRICE: And how had you always thought of me?

ALAN: Bee, what I felt for you was something—higher—finer——

BEATRICE: Was it? Or are you only trying to make yourself believe that?

ALAN: No; I respect you.

BEATRICE (*thinking*): I wonder which feeling a woman would rather rouse. And I wonder which is most like love.

ALAN: All the time, Bee, I have never loved any one but you.

BEATRICE: You say so now. But, forgive me, Alan, how am I to know?

ALAN: I am trying to show you that Fanny was one thing, you were another. Can't you understand? You know that father says I am to marry Fanny?

BEATRICE: What did you tell him?

ALAN: I told him I'd see him damned first.

BEATRICE (*with a movement of pleasure*): You did?

Alan (*quickly, noting that he has scored*): Bee, you'll stick to me, although I sha'n't have a penny? I'll get to work, though. I'll work for you. You won't have any cause to reproach me. If you'll only stick to me! If only you'll tell me you forgive me!

Beatrice: Could you have forgiven me—if I had done the same as you?

Alan (*surprised*): But — you — you couldn't do it!

Beatrice: Fanny Hawthorn did.

Alan: She's not your class.

Beatrice: She's a woman.

Alan: That's just it. It's different with a woman.

Beatrice: Yet you expect me to forgive you. It doesn't seem fair.

Alan: It isn't fair. But it's usual. It's what everybody agrees to.

Beatrice: I'm old-fashioned enough to really believe that there is a difference between men and women in cases of this sort. You see, men have never had to exercise self-control, like women have. And so I'm old-fashioned enough to be able to forgive you. But Fanny Hawthorn has a better right to you than I have.

Alan argues, but this is *Beatrice's* last word; so he reluctantly gives her his promise to marry *Fanny*. Having done so, he swaggers a bit, feeling very noble and heroic.

The *Farrars* leave, and shortly after the *Hawthorns* come in, *Christopher* meeker than usual, *Mrs. Hawthorn* a mixture of determination and triumph. *Fanny* is quite the easiest one there. She gives stare for stare, not boldly, but without embarrassment. They rehearse the details of the affair and plan for the wedding, *Fanny* sitting all the while in stubborn silence. *Alan* finally breaks in.

Alan: I should like to hear what Fanny says.

Fanny: I was just wondering where I come in.

Jeffcote: You'd better leave it to us, lass. We'll settle this job for you.

Fanny: It doesn't suit me to let you settle my affairs without so much as consulting me.

Mrs. Hawthorn: Consulting you? What is there to consult about, I'd like to know? You want to marry Alan, I suppose, and all we're talking about is the best way to bring it about.

Fanny: That's just where you make the mistake. I don't want to marry Alan. And, what's more, I haven't the least intention of marrying him.

They are all amazed.

Jeffcote: Now, what the devil do you mean by that?

Fanny: I mean what I say, and I'll trouble you to talk to me without swearing at me. I'm not one of the family yet.

Jeffcote: Well, I'm hanged!

He is much more polite to *Fanny* after this, for she has impressed him. But now he rubs his head and looks round queerly at the others.

Mrs. Jeffcote: Why shouldn't she have her own way? I don't think we have any right to press her; I don't really.

Mrs. Hawthorn: All you're after is to get Alan out of the hole he's in. You don't care about Fanny.

Mrs. Jeffcote: I'm sorry for Fanny, but of course I care more about my own child. After all, she knows better than we do whether she wants to marry Alan.

Jeffcote: Now then, Alan, what's the meaning of this? You've not been getting at her to-day and wheedling her into this?

Alan: Good Lord, no! What would have been the good of that? Besides, I never thought of it. Look here, father; just let me have a talk to her alone. It's not likely she'll care to speak with all you folk sitting round. (*The old folks leave the room.*) Now, Fanny, what's all this nonsense about? Why won't you marry me? My father's serious enough. He means it when he says he wants you to. What are you afraid of?

Fanny (*faintly amused*): How is it you aren't going to marry Beatrice Farrar? Weren't you fond of her?

Alan: Very.

Fanny: But you were fonder of me—eh? Come now; you must have been, or you wouldn't have given her up for me.

Alan: I gave her up because my father made me.

Fanny: Made you? Good Lord! A chap of your age!

Alan: My father's a man who will have his own way.

Fanny: You can tell him to go and hang himself. He hasn't got any hold over you.

Alan: That's just what he has. He can keep me short of brass.

FANNY: Then all you want to wed me for is for what you'll get with me. I'm to be given away with a pound of tea, as it were.

ALAN: No. You know I like you, Fanny—I'm fond of you.

FANNY: You didn't give up Beatrice because of me, but because of the money.

ALAN: If it comes to that, I didn't really give her up at all. I may as well be straight with you. It was she that gave me up.

FANNY: What did she do that for? Her father's plenty of money, and she can get round *him*, I'll bet, if you can't get round *yours*.

ALAN: She gave me up because she thought it was her duty to, because she thought you had the right to marry me.

FANNY: Glory! She must be queer!

ALAN: It was jolly fine of her! You ought to be the first to see that.

FANNY: Fine to give you up? (*She shrugs her shoulders.*) Well, I reckon it was a sacrifice of a sort. That is, if she loves you. If I loved a chap, I wouldn't do that.

ALAN: You would! You're doing it now. Women are more unselfish than men, and no mistake.

FANNY: What are you getting at?

ALAN: I know why you won't marry me. You're doing it for my sake.

FANNY: How do you make that out?

ALAN: You don't want to spoil my life. I'm not intending to say anything unkind, but, of course, it's as clear as daylight that you'd damage my prospects and all that sort of thing. You can see that, can't you?

FANNY: Aye! I can see it now you point it out. I hadn't thought of it before.

ALAN: Then that isn't why you refused me?

FANNY: Don't you kid yourself, my lad. It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling *your* life, but because I'm afraid of spoiling *mine*. That didn't occur to you?

ALAN (*not quite able to take this in*): It didn't.

FANNY: You never thought that anybody else could be as selfish as yourself.

ALAN: I may be very conceited, but I don't see how you can hurt yourself by wedding me. You'd come in for plenty of brass, anyhow.

FANNY: I don't know as money's much to go by when it comes to a job of this sort. It's more important to get the right chap. Suppose it didn't last? Weddings brought about this road have a knack of turning out badly. Would you ever forget it was your father bade you marry me? You'd bear me a grudge all your life for that.

ALAN Hang it; I'm not such a cad!

FANNY: You wouldn't be able to help it. It mostly happens that road. You don't find me making a mess of my life like that.

ALAN: But you must marry me. Don't you see it's your duty to?

FANNY: I like your cheek!

ALAN: But look here; I'm going to fall between two stools. It's all up with Beatrice, of course. And if you won't have me, I shall have parted from her to no purpose—besides getting kicked out of the house by my father more than likely.

FANNY: Nay, nay! He'll not punish you for this. He doesn't know it's *your* fault I'm not willing to wed you. He'll be only too pleased to get shut of me without eating his own words. He'll forgive you on the spot, and you can make it up with Beatrice to-morrow.

ALAN: I can never make it up with Bee. You won't understand a girl like Bee. I couldn't think of even trying for months, and then it may be too late. I'm not the only pebble on the beach. And I'm a damaged one at that.

FANNY: She's fond of you, you said?

ALAN: Yes. I think she's very fond of me.

FANNY: Then she'll make it up in a fortnight.

ALAN (*moodily*): You said you were *fond* of me once, but it hasn't taken you long to alter. You didn't ever really love me?

FANNY: Love you? Good heavens! Of course not! You're a man, and I was your little fancy. Well, I'm a woman, and *you* were *my* little fancy.

ALAN: But do you mean to say that you didn't care any more for me than a fellow cares for any girl he happens to pick up?

FANNY: Yes. Are you shocked?

ALAN: It's a bit thick; it is really.

FANNY: You're a beauty to talk!

ALAN: It sounds so jolly immoral. I never thought of a girl looking on a chap just like that! I made sure you wanted to marry me if you got the chance.

FANNY: No fear. You're not good enough for me. The chap Fanny Hawthorn weds has got to be made of different stuff from you, my lad. *My* husband, if ever I have one, will be a man—not a fellow

Photograph by White Studio.

Nathaniel Jeffcote (Herbert Lomas) impresses upon *Christopher Hawthorn* (Whitford Kane) **that he knows how to manage his own son, and will do so.**

who'll throw over his girl at his father's bidding. Strikes me the sons of these rich manufacturers are all much alike. They seem a bit weak in the upper story. It's their father's brass that's too much for them, happen. They don't know how to spend it properly. They're like chaps who can't carry their drink because they aren't used to it. The brass gets into their heads, like.

ALAN: Hang it, Fanny; I'm not quite a fool!

FANNY: No. You're not a fool altogether. But there's summat lacking. You're not man enough for me. You're a nice lad, and I'm fond of you. But I couldn't ever marry you. Come along now, and bid me farewell.

ALAN: I can't make you out rightly, Fanny, but you're a damn good sort, and I wish there were more like you.

FANNY: Good-by, lad.

ALAN (*grasping her hand*): Good-by, Fanny. And good luck.

FANNY: And now call them in again.

Jeffcote, when the old folks return, comes straight to the point.

JEFFCOTE: Well? What's it to be? Are you going to wed our Alan or are you not?

FANNY: I'm not.

ALAN: It's no good, father. I can't help it. I've done all I can. She won't have me.

JEFFCOTE: I'm beat this time. I wash my hands of it. There's no fathoming a woman. And these are the creatures that want us to give them votes!

After this, *Jeffcote* does not attempt to influence the discussion.

Mrs. Hawthorn (*in a shrill voice*): Do you tell us you're throwing away a chance like this?

Fanny: You've heard.

Mrs. Hawthorn: I call it wicked—I do indeed! I can see you are downright bad, through and through! There's one thing I tell you straight: Our house is no place for thee after this.

Fanny: You're not really angry with me because of what I've done. It's because I'm not going to have any of Mr. Jeffcote's money that you want to turn me out of the house.

Mrs. Hawthorn: It's not! It's because you chose to be a girl who's lost her reputation, instead of letting Alan make you into an honest woman.

Fanny: How can he do that?

Mrs. Hawthorn: By wedding you, of course.

Fanny: You called him a blackguard this morning.

Mrs. Hawthorn: So he is a blackguard.

Fanny: I don't see how marrying a blackguard is going to turn me into an honest woman.

Mrs. Hawthorn: If he marries you, he won't be a blackguard any longer.

Fanny: Then it looks as if I'm asked to wed him to turn him into an honest man.

Alan: It's no use bandying words about what's over and done with. I want to know what's all this talk of turning Fanny out of doors?

Hawthorn: Take no heed of it. My missus don't rightly know what she's saying just now.

Mrs. Hawthorn: Don't she? You're making a big mistake if you think that. Fanny can go home and fetch her things, and after that she may pack off.

Hawthorn: That she'll not!

Mrs. Hawthorn: Then I'll make it so hot for her in the house, and for thee, too, that thou'll be glad to see the back of her!

Fanny: This hasn't got anything to do with Mr. and Mrs. Jeffcote, has it? (*She rises.*)

Alan: It's got something to do with me, though! I'm not going to see you without a home.

Fanny (*smiling*): It's right good of you, Alan; but I sha'n't starve. I'm not without a trade at my finger-tips, thou knows. I'm a Lancashire lass, and so long as there's weaving-sheds in Lancashire, I shall earn enough brass to keep me going. I wouldn't live at home again after this, not anyhow. I'm going to be on my own in future. (*To her father.*) You've no call to be afraid. I'm not going to disgrace you. But so long as I've to live my own life, I don't see why I shouldn't choose what it's to be.

As *Fanny* is going out, *Mrs. Jeffcote* speaks.

Mrs. Jeffcote: Good-by, Fanny Hawthorn. If ever you want help, come to me.

Fanny: Ah! You didn't want us to wed?

Mrs. Jeffcote: No.

Fanny: You were straight enough.

Mrs. Jeffcote: I'm sure this is the best way out. I couldn't see any hope the other way.

The *Hawthorns* leave.

Mrs. Jeffcote: Where are you going to, Alan?

Alan: I'm just running round to Farrar's —to see Beatrice.

Mrs. Jeffcote (*not surprised*): You're going to ask her to marry you?

Alan (*laconically*): Happen I am.

Jeffcote: Well, I'm damned! Dost thou reckon she'll have thee?

Alan: That remains to be seen.

Jeffcote: Aren't you reckoning without me?

Alan: Hang it; be fair! I've done my best. It's not my fault that Fanny won't have me.

Jeffcote: Well, if Beatrice Farrar can fancy thee, it's not for me to be too particular. Get along! I'm disgusted with thee.

Alan goes.

Mrs. Jeffcote: Beatrice will have him. She loves him; she told me so.

Jeffcote: There's no accounting for tastes. (*He ruminates.*) So Beatrice loves him, does she? Eh—but women are queer folk! Who'd have thought that Fanny would refuse to wed him?

Mrs. Jeffcote: It is strange. It makes you feel there is something in Providence after all.

Next month's play will be a delightful new American comedy called "Kempy," by J. C. and Elliott Nugent. See November Everybody's—out October 14th.

Concluding Chapters of

THE SOUL-SCAR

The Mystery of One Pine Inn Turns Out to Be Something Entirely Different from What Miss Merilda Imagined, and Natalie Changes Her Mind on an Important Matter

By Beldon Duff

Author of "Twenty-four Hours"

Illustration by Harold Anderson

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

NOW that Miss Merilda Tillinghast, by disappearing completely, had gotten herself embodied in the mystery she was so bent on solving, the interest of her niece, Natalie Mallinson, turned to acute alarm. The two ladies had come to the One Pine Inn in the mountains—Natalie under protest; Miss Merilda, who had a romantic longing for adventure, impelled by a statement in the inn's booklet that there was a bird-bath with a mystery. But Natalie was taken at once by the queer assortment of people she found round the hotel. First, there was Jones, the clerk. She had met him five years before on a Pacific liner—a strange, violent-tempered creature, who had killed a coolie on the voyage. A soul-scar, he said he had. Then there were Miss Pringle, the proprietress, who seemed very uneasy about something; Tillie, the Swedish cook, who was a circus rider, vaudeville performer or something like that and had a husband who was talked of but was not in evidence; Bill, the chauffeur, a good-for-nothing individual with an invalid brother, and weak-willed Sammy Todd, whose sister was one of the waitresses. All of these Natalie resolved to study.

Miss Merilda's attention, on the other hand, was focused on an unnumbered room she discovered on the top floor, which was occupied but which no one ever entered. Food was deposited in the hall outside and taken within. Miss Merilda was sure that if any unusual situation existed, it centered about this apartment. So she pleaded illness, stayed up-stairs and kept an eye as well as she could on that unnumbered room.

But presently the bird-bath did yield a mystery, quite as startling as it was unexpected. For in it one morning was found the badly bruised body of a woman. She had arrived in an automobile several days before with a man, evidently an Italian, taking refuge from a bad and prolonged storm. So imposing and regal was her manner that Natalie dubbed her the "princess-woman." And now she was dead—and apparently murdered, her body found that morning in the bird-bath.

Natalie's thoughts immediately flew to Jones, for she had heard him say savagely to the princess-woman, "You will—if it's the last act of your life and mine!" And at three o'clock the next morning, investigating a noise in the hall, she had seen Jones in the bathroom with a blood-stained towel and handkerchief in his hand. He had cut himself shaving, he told her. But, in spite of this, the girl had an inexplicable desire to protect the man; so she said nothing.

Burby, the coroner, arrived, quite incapable of handling the case, and also police officials from a near-by city. Every one was questioned, but no evidence to fasten the crime was produced. Meanwhile, Natalie made two discoveries. She saw in the hands of Sammy Todd ruby earrings which she recognized as those the murdered woman had worn. Also, in the car in which the woman had come to the inn, she found a quantity of jewels. These were tied up in a blood-stained handkerchief. And she remembered Jones and the shaving episode—but no; she could not believe him guilty. She hid the jewels in her room, from which they were almost immediately stolen. She had reasons for suspecting Bill of this. She took Jones into her confidence about the earrings and together they went to Sammy Todd's house, but were denied admittance. On the way back the clerk was attacked in the darkness, and afterward fired on by some one else. On reporting this, the policemen started out to search for the assailants.

Very early the next morning Natalie discovered that her aunt had vanished. She rushed down stairs to tell the news. Just then the policemen arrived with a prisoner. He was the murdered woman's companion—the Italian. He stood before the coroner and accused Jones.

"He is the man!" he cried. "He say, if she leave with me, he keel——"

"You hear him, Jones?" the coroner asked sharply. "What have you got to say?"

And Jones replied simply:

"What can I say? It is true."

A moment later, handcuffs were on his wrists.

NATALIE went back to her aunt's room and threw herself across Miss Merilda's bed, burying her face in her arms. She had no gift for tears. Her outburst was dry, withering—a sand-storm in a desert—followed by exhaustion.

The click of the handcuffs, the unemotional exactness of the clerk's admission, the horror on the faces grouped behind him had shattered her carefully reared structure of faith.

When she raised her head, the room had warmed under the touch of the sun. A bar of golden light poked its way through the interlacing branches of the sugar-maple outside and twinkled over Miss Merilda's open dressing-case. The dear familiar absurdities—the head-harness worn at night to subdue a set of double chins; the box of anti-fat lozenges; an evil-smelling bottle of citronella oil, a concoction far more objectionable than the mosquitoes for which it was intended; a boudoir-cap liberally sprinkled with pink bows—how much a part of their indefatigible owner they all were!

Natalie sat up and pushed the hair back from her forehead. Where *was* Aunt Merilda? With the question came the conviction that the clerk's arrest had not solved the mystery that was hanging over the One Pine Inn. The three-cornered fight in the moonlight, the white package with the red string, the ruby earrings, the extraordinary behavior of Sammy Todd, the room without a number, the——

The room without a number!

At last the solution! Aunt Merilda had made up her mind to do some sleuthing—meddlesome old try-patience—had sneaked off to the top floor and——

Ask Miss Pringle for help? The lady of the house, aided and abetted by Tillie, had staged a complete collapse. The two policemen—Mr. Burby? Still shut in the office with Jones and the Italian. Bill? A vision of the chauffeur's ugly scowl.

After all, why ask for help—why focus attention on Aunt Merilda? The silly-billy might not want to have any one know what she'd been up to.

On the top floor, Natalie found twelve doors—twelve closed, unlocked doors. All led to bedrooms—all were empty. 37—38—39—small brass numerals in need of polishing but clear enough to be deciphered. The arrangement was perplexingly simple—no turns, no alcoves—nothing but a straight, wide corridor. And, then, Miss Merilda's description—a cul-de-sac under the stairs leading to the roof. She retraced her steps. Yes; there it was. She had passed it twice without realizing that it was not a part of the stairway itself. There was not even a knob or a keyhole—a slight difference only in the panels—a grimy spot, the imprints of many fingers.

A moment of indecision—so gripping is the fear of the unknown—then, alive to full consciousness of danger, Natalie pushed softly. The door did not yield. She pulled. Still it held.

"S-sh!" A warning whisper.

The investigating hand paused in mid-air. The door creaked back, an inch at a time. A shadowy blur—lips close to the crack—one whispered word.

Natalie Mallinson's mouth opened, but no sound came. Her lips were stiff. So *this* was the secret of the unnumbered room—a secret which left one helpless, impotent.

How long she stood in dazed silence, she never knew. A cry from somewhere outside the house roused her—a weird echo, faint, unreal, far-distant. But she had all she could attend to right where she was. Once more her hand sought the door of the unnumbered room.

On the top of the hill behind the house, a small figure loped with uneasy, restless steps across the flat rock, back and forth, back and forth. Now it faced toward the broad meadow-lands of the west valley, now toward the chimneys of the One Pine Inn, with their wreaths of morning smoke.

As well for Natalie that she could not see Sammy Todd's strange antics, could not know when he left the rock to hover over something lying among the huckleberry bushes—as well that she could not glmpse the pair of feet that stuck out through a break in the thicket, the hand that lay upturned to the sun, limp, nerveless.

The boy touched the hand cautiously, waited, touched it again. With a shake of the head, he scuttled back to the rock and began that distracted, aimless zigzag—his small black eyes ever on the alert.

A waitress opened the dining-room windows. The boy saw Tillie picking beans in the kitchen-garden, and, ten minutes later, he saw Natalie Mallinson run from the house to the barn—from the barn to the bowling-alley—to the house again.

With an eager whine he settled down cross-legged, his fingers stripping the leaves from a mullein-stalk, his ears cocked for any sound from the thicket.

MEANWHILE, at the inn, events moved with machinelike precision. A coroner's inquest was as great a novelty in Mink Harbor as the circus. Wagons, carryalls, now and then a flivver rolled up the road to park on the front lawn—country people arriving armed with lunch-baskets. The men grouped to talk of fertilizers and mowing-machines; the wives gossiped. One woman had a bag of socks to darn, another a pair of overalls that needed patching.

Mr. Burby and the doctor who had examined the body closeted themselves in a room up-stairs, while at a table in the office, the two policemen and their prisoners ate a substantial breakfast. After a tub, a shave and fresh linen, the Italian looked as dapper as an advertisement for a new brand of collars, his confidence increasing with every mouthful. Jones, still in the disfiguring sweater, hunched his shoulders over a plate and bolted bacon, flabby pancakes and coffee.

All four men came to their feet with a jerk at Natalie Mallinson's unexpected appearance. She had not waited for the formality of a knock.

"I thought you said no one was to leave this house?"

"We did say so!"—in a roar from both officers.

"Tell me, then"—carefully keeping her eyes away from Jones—"what's become of Bill? He's gone! The buckboard's gone!" She advanced to the table. "You're a fine pair, calling yourselves officers of the law! This common, ignorant chauffeur has put it all over you. He's run away, taken his brother and all their belongings. Can't you see—don't you realize what a mistake you've made?"

Something clicked in the clerk's throat. His expression changed. A mirthless smile tightened the lines about his mouth.

There was a hurried consultation between the two policemen, a volley of questions, a whispered council of war.

Taking advantage of the Italian's resentment as he found himself being put back into handcuffs, Natalie looked for the first time at the silent figure by her side.

"Where's my aunt? Tell me!" The question was hardly more than a breath. "What have you done with her? You were the only one who knew she meant to visit that room. What have you done with her?" The clerk's eyes narrowed. Despair drove her on. "Oh, please, please don't look like that! I need help—you can't—you won't fail me"—her voice breaking. "You're the only one I have to depend upon. What did you say to Miss Tillinghast last evening while we were all in the dining-room? What happened after she talked to you and—Bill?"

The two officers turned from the Italian.

"What's this about your aunt?"

"She's been gone all night."

"Why didn't you tell us right away?"

"I didn't know it myself until just a little while ago. I thought she was in her room, safe; but—but—it seems she was told something—something that threw suspicion on Bill and, while we were all at supper, she went to the barn and——"

A sudden crash. The breakfast-table, cups, saucers, coffee-pot, knives, forks in a litter on the floor—the two officers hurled to opposite sides of the small room. Holding a large metal tea-tray in front of him as a shield, Jones retreated cautiously toward the door.

"Stand back," he ordered, "all of you!"

One of the policemen was on the floor among the broken dishes. As the other reached for his six-shooter, the tray caught him full in the face. The next instant they heard Jones plunging down the flight of steps to the front lawn.

A small car headed toward Mink Harbor had just disgorged its load of curiosity-seekers. The clerk made the tonneau in one leap. With a sweep of an arm, he caught the youthful driver by the back of the collar and swung him over the side. Vaulting into the front seat, he slid under the wheel and threw in the clutch. The car shot forward.

Everywhere mud, slime, pools of water. Only by steering from side to side could the worst spots be covered.

Beyond the woods, the road-bed changed. More treacherous, if possible, the ruts, some of them a foot high, were baked dry and hard. With a grating of gears, the car took the up grade. From the high ground could be seen the lake, spreading like a sheet of silver between the mountains.

Turning, Jones caught a glimpse of a jitney glistening in all its outrageous newness. Pursuit! With the eye of a practised driver, he gaged the advantage the lighter car would have in the race, and brought his toe down on the accelerator.

Fifty yards ahead, a giant oak, blasted by the storm, hung at a perilous angle over the road.

The clerk's wits, sharpened by danger, worked like a steel trap. He saw the tree, conceived on the instant a daring play and, knowing well that the odds were against him, let his machine come to a stop under the lee of the bank. Snatching a towing-chain from the floor of the tonneau, he reached up and fastened one end about a thick branch. On the ground, he secured the other end to the springs, jumped back to his seat and set the engine racing. The rear wheels bucked, bumped, rose from the road and spun helplessly.

The chug-chug of the jitney grew louder.

A quick shift of gears, a groan, a crackle, a snap. The fissure in the trunk widened. The upper half of the giant oak came crashing to the ground. Jones looked over his shoulder and grinned at the success of his *coup*. The engine still running, he wrenched the chain free and flung it aside. A bullet spattered through the wind-shield. With a leisurely wave of the hand to the two officers who stared at him helplessly through the interlacing branches, he climbed into his place, settled himself, unmindful of a second bullet that wizzed dangerously close to his left ear, and let in the clutch.

The fallen tree was an effectual barrier across the Mink Harbor road; the only other way to the landing was by the Lakeport turnpike—a shabby stretch of rock and gravel that tore the heart out of a car. Twenty minutes gained, if a second!

AS JONES reached the lake, he swung car into the shallow ditch at the side of the road and, disregarding the door, jumped over the side. Stepping up to an old man who was sorting fishing-tackle on the wooden float, the clerk jingled some loose coin in his trousers pocket.

"Where's the *Nixie*?"

A shake of the head was his reply.

Jones looked up the road, the one that led to the lake by way of the turnpike. Still a mere speck in the distance, a small car turned into sight.

"Where's the one-lung scow Joe uses?"

A gnarled thumb dabbed the air. An unseaworthy-looking rowboat, in it a small kicker, was drawn well up on the beach.

A shrug of contempt from the clerk—a searching scrutiny of the horizon.

Far out on the lake, a small, trim power-boat was gliding rapidly toward the shore.

Snatching a paddle from the rack on the side of the shanty, he slid a long green canoe off the float.

"See you later!" Dropping on one knee in the canoe, he dipped the paddle into the water and headed with a long, even stroke for the approaching motor-boat.

A young lady in a Bramley dress and large tortoise-shell glasses turned the wheel of the motor-boat with a pair of capable brown hands, but, no matter how she veered, the canoe which had just shot out from shore seemed determined to be run down. With an indignant exclamation she shut off the engine. The canoe swept alongside.

"Excuse me!" An arm in a faded misfit sweater gripped the side of the motor-boat. "I want to hire this outfit for one hour. Oh—all right"—catching the upward tilt of the sunburned nose—"borrow it, then."

Already he was half-way over the side.

"What's the idea?"

"We change places.

"If this is an adventure"—the owner of the nose was disposed to bargain—"count me in on it. I'll take you where you want to go."

"Nothing doing—too risky."

The girl gathered her scant henna colored skirt about her knees and stepped into the canoe.

"I hope you'll meet her in time," she observed, as she seated herself and picked up the paddle. "There's a minister in that little gray cabin near the Chesire Cat Tea House. He's awfully nice and quite accommodating. Leave the boat at Mink Harbor and—good luck!"

Jones, forgetting that he was bareheaded, lifted his hand to his head.

"Thanks for the tip and all the rest—you're a regular feller!"

He started the engine, swept the long white bow round in a circle and headed toward the south end of the lake and—the railway station.

HALF an hour later, a low, rakish-looking gray roadster drew up before the door of the One Pine Inn. Its driver, a thick-set man in blue serge, topped off by a rowdy black-and-white checker-board cap, stepped out with easy assurance and mounted the stairway to the porch. He noted the excited countryfolk, the wide open front door, the group in the hall.

"May I come in?" the checker-board cap made a gallant semicircle and, as his eyes rested on a girl standing tragically dumb in the center of the group: "What's the trouble, sister? Anything I can do?"

Natalie Mallinson never could understand what it was that made her turn to this stranger and fling her troubles on his lavender-silk shirt-front. He was not the sort of man she would, under ordinary circumstances, have taken for a confidant.

With a despairing gesture she indicated the gaping mouths, curious eyes, and drew him into the living-room. In an incoherent jumble of words she told all that had happened, ending with the disappearance of Miss Merilda and the flight of the clerk.

When she had finished, the man nodded with a sympathetic interest that went nine-tenths of the way toward calming the beat in her temples.

"You've brought your troubles to the right doctor, sister," he said. "I'm O'Meara — Tim O'Meara — O'Meara's Detective Agency—my card."

With a flourish he drew out an elaborately printed piece of pasteboard.

Natalie had grown so accustomed to the suddenness with which things happened at the One Pine Inn that she would not have been surprised to see Mr. De Valera himself pop out of the piano like a jack-in-a-box and start to lay about with a shillalah. The opportune appearance of a New York detective, even a detective undoubtedly as well known as Tim O'Meara, did not seem at all unusual. She accepted the card without looking at it, twisting it absently between her fingers.

The part of her story that seemed to interest O'Meara the most was Jones. And, after that, the unnumbered room on the top floor. He made her go over what she had told him again, interrupting constantly with questions. Once he consulted a note-book full of pothooks and hieroglyphics, over which he shook his head and pursed his lips in alternate disgust and satisfaction. When the rubber band had been snapped round the book, the book thrust back into his pocket, he gave Natalie's shoulder an encouraging pat.

"You and me are going to get on like a pair of old shoes, sister," he confided. "Let's go out and talk to this Miss Pringle, and then we'll be after finding your aunt.

I doubt me if the good lady's far from the home plate. She——"

A sneeze, an explosive, hastily smothered sneeze——

O'Meara thrust an arm out the window beside which they had been sitting and drew into view a plump, red-cheeked young woman. Without a word he assisted her over the sill, all arms and scrambling, sturdy legs.

Once inside the room, the girl smoothed her apron, stole a sidelong look at Natalie, and courtesied.

It was Sammy Todd's sister.

"Young woman"—the detective wagged his forefinger under the snub nose—"that's no way to come upon a man with a weak heart. You must have something heavy on your chest. Let's have it."

The girl courtesied again.

"I ben listenin'!"

"The divil you say!" O'Meara smiled.

"Yes, sir. I heard what you said about that room on the top floor." And then, forgetting her awkwardness: "You an' her"—pointing toward Natalie—"needn't be afraid. I ben up there. It ain't what you think."

O'Meara adjusted his tie.

"Come across! What is it?"

"Chicken-pox."

"No, no!" Natalie Mallinson leaned forward. "Smallpox! Smallpox is what——"

"Oh, huh!"—a contemptuous grunt from the Todd girl. "That's what they all been a-thinkin'. Tried not to let on, but I knew they was up to somepen'. First, Lucy, the new waitress, was with us; then she wasn't. Miss Pringle said she'd took sick an' went home, but no one knew when or how. Me, I kep' quiet an' watched. By an' by, I caught Tillie carryin' a tray up-stairs. Right off I knew where I could find Lucy Painter. When I got a chance, I slipped in an' talked to her. She ain't no more had smallpox than me. I nursed Sam through chicken-pox—I oughta know."

"In that case"—O'Meara looked from one to the other of the girls—"I vote, instead of going to Miss Pringle, we visit Miss Painter—Miss Lucy Painter, I think you said—and hear what she can tell us. You're not afraid of chicken-pox, are you, Miss Mallinson? You've been exposed already, you know. Brave girl!"—taking a shake of the head to indicate willingness to run the blockade. "Is there a back stairway? Ah"—as the waitress nodded—"that's good! Lead. We follow."

THE mysterious unnumbered room was small. Lighted and aired by a mere slit in the wall, it contained an army-cot, a chair, a wash-stand. On the side of the cot, her chin on her hands, her elbows on her knees, sat a girl. More dispirited than ill was the inward comment of the shrewd O'Meara. A few adroit questions, a little sympathy, and the thin shoulders straightened, the eyes kindled. The resentment she had been harboring for days flared into speech.

She had come from Manchester in answer to an advertisement for waitresses. Three days after her arrival, she had begun to feel queer—spots all over her—funny little blisters that itched. Miss Pringle, with the help of Tillie, had transferred her from the maids' quarters to the room on the top floor where they usually kept the extra furniture. It was done at night, quietly, for fear the few guests would hear about it and leave. The clerk and Bill, the chauffeur, had taken turns going to Lakeport for medicines—nasty medicines. She cried when she had to take them, and said she would rather die. But Tillie told her to shut up. There wasn't anything the matter with her—just one of the children's diseases. And they had continued to keep her on the top floor, away from every one—a prisoner. She hated them, hated them all.

In the girl's weakened state, everything became a grievance. Her resentment grew with the telling as a snowball gathers to itself girth on its journey down the hillside.

Just when she began to feel better, Miss Pringle received a letter telling about an epidemic of smallpox in Manchester. The four—Tillie, Bill, Miss Pringle, Jones—were scared stiff. It served 'em right—she hoped she had had smallpox.

The tedium of convalescence was relieved by spying on the guests from an upper window or by clandestine excursions down the stairs to find out what had happened since her illness. On one of these excursions she had seen the old city lady poking about through the rooms. She looked nice, and Sammy Todd's sister had said she was generous with tips.

The night of the storm, the room on the top floor became unbearable. The roof leaked; a mouse gnawed a crust or something under her bed; the wind howled, and the music down-stairs bothered her. She could not sleep. Still weak, a little afraid, she propped the door open. After every one had come up-stairs and, she supposed, the house closed for the night, footsteps in the lower hall had excited her curiosity—stealthy footsteps. The girl crept out of her room and half-way down the stairs. A woman wearing a bright-red coat was in the lower hall. Something about this woman made the watcher more nervous than ever. She followed her to the door of the living-room. In there were two men—Jones, the clerk, and a small man with a black mustache. Both men crossed the room to meet the woman in the red coat. Then Jones closed the door.

"And after that," said the girl, with a swift return to her former apathy, "they talked and they talked—sometimes loud and sometimes low. So I went back to bed. That's all."

"Good! Now tell us about Miss Tillinghast—what you said to her—what she said to you when she came up here," O'Meara prompted briskly.

The small face flushed.

"That's all."

"But, my dear little girl"—the detective's tone was wheedling—"Miss Tillinghast has disappeared—we want to find her. You must help us." A stubborn shake of the head. "What made you tell Miss Tillinghast that Bill killed this woman?"

Lucy Painter began to cry again.

"Because he did," she sobbed; "because he did."

O'Meara tried a new tack. His voice grew stern.

"Come, now—no nonsense! Didn't Miss Tillinghast tell you she was going to find Bill when she left this room last night?"

The sick girl put her hands to her head. Her face puckered in protest. She collapsed limply across the foot of the bed.

THE long white motor-boat dipped her nose into the blue water of the lake and left a fan-shaped ruffle of foam behind her.

Jones looked over his shoulder.

A green canoe and a disreputable, noisy scow had met in the middle distance.

He grinned at a white cloud that was spinning itself into long, thin tentacles over his head, and, in a shower of spray, changed his course to keep parallel with the opposite shore. His eyes swept the lake on either side. Here and there a canoe or a motor-boat, but all a good half-mile away. His path was clear.

The steady swish-swish of water against the bow—the silvery leap of a bass—the hoarse note of a crow. A clean bit of the world, this lake under its cobalt sky. And now another sound—the siren shriek of a locomotive—the New York train.

With a glance at the indicator on the dial, the clerk of the One Pine Inn put on full-steam ahead.

"Come on, old girl; shake a leg!" he urged, patting the wheel.

The boat leaped, trembled, settled back to skim the water. Again the whistle—clearer, closer.

In a cove, the landing—a long train-shed—a handful of buildings—a dock—the *Wamapee* letting off a cloud of black smoke—an array of small craft.

As the motor-boat grated alongside the float, the train thundered into the station. The clerk's eyes searched the platform from end to end. Far down the track a group—white-coated porters, a conductor, two or three passengers boarding the last car.

Shouting at the top of his lungs, he raced down the cinder bed beside the track. The group fell apart; one of the figures leaped for the Pullman.

"No you don't!"

With a burst of speed, the clerk reached the spot. His hand shot out; the figure came off the step with a jerk. It was Bill!

Jones spun him round as though he were an empty hogshead.

"Thought you'd get away, eh, and leave me to face the music? Some yarn you tried to stuff me with last night, you——"

The chauffeur tore free.

"Yarn?" he snarled. "Be damned to you! Look there!" He pointed to the platform of the car.

A slender man, not above the average in height, with a thin, intellectual face and brown eyes, near-sighted without the glasses to which they were so evidently accustomed, was peering out from the vestibule of the Pullman. Jones fell back.

"You? Good God!"

Painfully, one foot dragging, the man hobbled down the steps.

"You seem surprised to see me here, but what of yourself?" he demanded. "How do you explain your presence?"

"All aboard!"—the conductor on the car ahead.

"Is you or isn't you?" inquired the dusky porter, indicating the train.

"Well?" The clerk, his hand still on Bill's collar, looked at the man who had just limped from the Pullman. "Now's your chance—decide!"

The man spread out his hands in token of defeat.

"You have decided for me."

The whistle shrieked; the porter picked up his footstool and hopped aboard; the train moved on. As the last car faded into the perspective of the track, a shabby motor-boat with a one-lung engine panted up to the dock.

SAMMY TODD, sitting tailor-fashion on the flat rock, saw the searching party of three headed by O'Meara leave the inn and go to the bowling-alley. He jabbered excitedly, jumped up and down like a wizened brown ape and ran to the huckleberry bushes.

The feet he had been guarding were still motionless.

Satisfied, he trotted down the slope to the alley.

Natalie was the first to see him.

"Sammy Todd!" she whispered to O'Meara. "He's trying to attract your attention."

The detective stepped to the door. For once the country boy had lost his timidity. With an eager gesture toward the hillside, he plucked the detective by the sleeve.

"Dead!" he mouthed. "All dead in the bushes."

"Hey, you, Sam"—from his sister—"shut your mouth! There, now"—hearing Natalie's agonized cry—"see what you done! Don't pay no attention to him, miss. He's lyin' just like always."

But Natalie was already half-way up the slope. O'Meara, for all his ample waistband, was fleet of foot. Before the distracted girl could see the thing in the huckleberry bushes, he had reached her side.

"Let me," he urged. "You go back." And then, with a quick exclamation of relief: "Steady! Don't faint. It's not your aunt. It's a man."

"A man?" Natalie and the country girl, clasped in each other's arms, asked the same question: "Is he dead?"

O'Meara stooped.

"Sure!" he said, straightening up with a cheerful grin. "He's dead, all right—dead drunk."

Natalie sat down quickly on the edge of the rock. The thought of anything happening to Aunt Merilda had affected her more than she would have imagined possible. Sammy Todd's sister peered over the detective's shoulder.

"I know *him*," she announced. "It's Ole Petersen, Tillie's husband. Oh, my! Look at his eye!"

"Been in a fight, I guess. Some boy!" O'Meara pointed to the thick chest and bull neck. "A two-hundred-and-fifty pounder if he's an ounce." And then, with an exclamation of surprise: "Why, bless me, if it isn't the Swedish Lion! He used to be in the wrestling game. There was one time when only Frank Gotch could put this baby on the mat."

Natalie left the rock and joined them. A glance at the prostrate figure, and she knew that one mystery, at least, was solved.

"That's the man who attacked Mr.—who jumped out on the clerk last night, down there by the bowling-alley. It was so dark we—I thought it was some kind of a monster. And so it is"—with a gesture of repugnance. "Great nasty brute!" She turned to the Todd girl. "How did you know who he was?"

The girl bridled.

"He's ben stayin' up to our house. That's why we wouldn't let you in—you and Mr. Jones. Sam found him half drunk in the woods. He paid for his lodgin', an' granny said we had as good a right to his money as anybody."

"Oh, don't bother to explain it." Natalie laughed a little unsteadily. "If I can only find Aunt Merilda and know that she's safe, I——"

"That's the talk!" O'Meara took her by the arm. "Our friend in the bushes can wait. Let's search the barn."

The barn, with its six stalls, its hayloft and grain-bins, was little more than a shell. When the War of 1812 stirred two continents, the farmer who had cut the timber and driven the uprights laid down his nails and hammer to take up a gun. It was his son and his grandson who finished the rooftree and drove the first cattle across the wide floor. Now the roof gaped in twenty places—the planks rotted. The stalls were empty. Like a great ship that has spread its sails for the last time, there was something almost pitiful in the crumbling decay of this monster shelter.

The atmosphere of depression communicated itself to the searching party. Unconsciously, O'Meara's suave, chatty voice dropped to a whisper; the Todd girl walked on tiptoe; even Natalie faltered and peered anxiously about.

She pointed out to the detective the car in which she had found the jewels. He did not do any of the things which she had always supposed detectives did. There were no magnifying glasses; no creeping about on hands and knees, looking for footprints. He merely traced a cryptic triangle and circle on the panel of the door with a stubby forefinger.

"What have we here—a member of the Forty and One Club? That's as near to being a hundred per cent. Simon pure on the 'Social Register' as they make 'em. We're dealing with the haristocracy."

He turned to the stalls. One by one they came in for inspection—not a minute inspection but a quick, searching scrutiny. They were empty. The musty feed-bins, the harness-room, the cow-shed—all equally unproductive.

Slapping the white meal dust from his shoulders, he rejoined the two girls.

"Nothing here—" He paused.

A thump, thump from somewhere overhead—an indescribable, muffled tap.

The girls huddled close. O'Meara reached in his hip-pocket, to pull out not a gun but an electric torch. Gripping it between his teeth, he climbed the ladder.

As his head and shoulders disappeared through the rectangle of blackness, Natalie ran to the ladder.

The thumps were repeated. She hesitated. Once more the terror of the unknown. The light from the pocket-flash played above her, sending hobgoblins of shadow over walls and rafters. A hen driven from her nest flapped noisily to the floor. The Todd girl gave a smothered shriek.

The detective shuffled noisily among the loose hay; he stumbled and ripped out a startled oath. There was the sound of another voice, thick, mumbling. Natalie went up the ladder.

IN THE wavering circle of light lay a figure, its back and shoulders securely lashed to the upright against which it sat, its jaws moving painfully.

"Oh, Aunt Merilda!" Natalie was on her knees, unfastening the silk handkerchief that had been used as a gag. "You poor, poor dear—whatever have they done to you?" And, as O'Meara fumbled with the fastenings: "Cut them—cut them! Don't stop to fuss!"

"Cut the cord of my best dressing-gown!" Her jaws once more free, Miss Merilda turned a flood of indignation on her niece. "He'll do nothing of the sort. If I've sat here for nearly twenty-four hours, I guess I can sit here for five more minutes. Undo me properly. What's got into you, Natalie? Your fingers are all thumbs!"

In her haste to comply, the girl stooped just in time to crack her forehead against the bullet head of the detective, coming up with the announcement that the knots were yielding. Through a whirligig of stars she saw the cord fall away, her aunt struggle painfully to her feet.

"Don't touch me!" The old lady was still bent double, her hands cautiously rubbing the crooks out of her knees. "I don't want your help. All this time—and never finding me! Ow—ouch!"—as she stooped to pick up from the straw a curious-looking musical instrument fashioned of an old box and some wire. "I suppose you let him get away."

"Who?" O'Meara guided the tottering steps toward the ladder.

Miss Merilda squatted herself at the edge of the rectangular opening and placed her feet firmly on the top rung. In her wadded-silk dressing-gown, her hair a stiff halo of tin curlers, the cigar-box ukulele hugged to her bosom, she looked like a caricature of Orpheus about to descend into the lower regions.

"I should think you'd know who was who by this time. I mean the owner of this contraption of course"—indicating the ukulele—"that scalawag Bill. An ingenious devil, Natalie; picked six tunes out of it. A pity he can't have a real fiddle." She lowered herself, assisted from below by the Todd girl and from above by O'Meara.

"Mind—don't let me drop!" And then, as her feet touched the floor: "Who says I'm getting old? Blondin himself couldn't have done better. Why, what's going on?"—pointing to the crowd about the house. "A coroner's inquest, eh?" She chuckled. "Our old friend Burby again. Too bad he wasn't in my shoes—he would have had a chance to catch the man——"

"Who? Who?"—a distracted chorus from Natalie, O'Meara and the country girl.

"Hoo! Hoo! Is that all you can say? Owls! You don't deserve to have your curiosity gratified. But"—with a shake of the head—"I suppose you'll never find out until I tell you. The man in the hay-loft, the stranger Bill smuggled out of here at six this morning."

MISS MERILDA'S return to the inn was hardly the triumphal march she would have desired. For some obscure reason of his own, O'Meara insisted that she go in the back way and up to her room, telling no one she had returned.

"For, you see," he urged, "nobody knows you were gone. And, bad 'cess to 'em, nobody cares. They're so taken up with ghoulish glee over the corpse in the house, they're after forgetting the living that should be in the house and ain't. If we keep our tongue in our cheek, we can surprise 'em yet."

When Miss Merilda was once more tucked into bed and Natalie rubbing cologne on her forehead while O'Meara concocted a mixture that required hot water, sliced lemon and half the contents of a pocket-flask, injured dignity was forgotten. Between sips, the story of the night's imprisonment came out.

The elderly adventurer's first visit to the unnumbered room had been unsatisfactory. The Painter girl would not talk at all. At tea-time she had tried again, heard Tillie on the stairs, only to escape discovery by crawling under the bed. A passage at arms between Tillie and the girl gave her the first intimation as to the nature of the girl's illness. Feeling a bit squeemish, she had crawled out after the cook's departure and listened to an outburst of fear and rage. It was clear that Lucy Painter was consumed by hatred of the One Pine Inn and all its inmates.

"She told me," Miss Merilda continued, taking up the story from the point where the sick girl had begun her spying, "that Jones, the Italian and the woman in the red coat had a quarrel in the living-room—a quarrel that grew so bitter it frightened her back to bed. After waiting a long time, she decided to listen some more, but the voices in the living-room had ceased. The hall door was open. She was sure about that, because the wind banged it so constantly she decided to go all the way down and turn the key in the lock. Bill's unexpected appearance held her where she was. He waited to be sure no one was watching him, and then went to the office. When he came out, he had something that looked like blankets or rugs over his arm.

"And that," concluded Miss Merilda, "was what put it into my head to question Bill."

"And what did Bill have to say for himself?" O'Meara refilled the empty glass.

"Bill"—the shoulders of the wadded-silk dressing-gown rose indignantly—"Bill was sitting on an old bucket playing his ukulele, and when I asked him what he wanted with those blankets, he was impertinent—told me to mind my own business—tried to put me out of the barn. His actions suggested that he was hiding some one, and I told him I meant to search."

"Yes?" A prodding interrogation from the detective.

"Well"—Miss Merilda flopped back and regarded her audience caustically—"I searched. I went up to the hay-loft, and the first thing I knew Bill tripped me into a pile of hay and sat on me—sat on me, mind you—exactly as though I had been a sack of meal."

Consumed by sympathetic horror, her niece let the cologne run in a thin trickle over the bedspread.

"What did you do?"

"Do? What could I do? Just laid still while he trussed me up like a fowl and tied me to a post. But when he started to stick his filthy old handkerchief into my mouth, I bit him on the thumb—bit him till he bled. It was then the other man spoke up. First time I'd seen him. He offered Bill a clean white-silk handkerchief, and after I was fixed so I couldn't speak, he began to urge me to give my word of honor not to tell any one that he was there. I kept shaking my head and glaring at him; and at last he said, 'You have the Tillinghast nerve,' which was odd, because I hadn't told him my name. After that he kept fairly quiet. There were a couple of times he groaned, and once he said something to Bill about his leg and being out of luck. I gathered that Bill had agreed to get him away before any one came to the barn. He seemed low in his mind. I feel sorry for that man."

"Would you know him if you saw him again?" O'Meara asked.

"I might and then again I mightn't. Remember, the hay-loft is dark."

MR. BURBY, by a process of slow and ponderous reasoning, had induced a jury of six perspiring farmers in store clothes and Sunday shoes to bring in a verdict. The deceased had come to her death by an unknown weapon in the hands of a person or persons likewise unknown.

It was four o'clock, and the crowd dispersed slowly, to eat what was left in the lunch-boxes before starting on the trip back to wherever home happened to be. It had been, all things considered, an agreeable outing.

Hadn't there been shooting—the added thrill of a regular movie chase? Wasn't it more than possible that the big young man who had stolen a car and been followed by two policemen, also in a stolen car—if you could speak of policemen stealing—wasn't it possible that this man was the murderer? Of course, the owners of the two cars were not satisfied, but, then, you couldn't please everybody. And, anyway, there were the cars now. What a lucky thing no one had gone home! Watch out for more doings! Yes; there were the policemen and the young man and several others. What was the matter with the last man? Couldn't he walk? Had some one shot him? This was going to be good.

Jones looked neither to right nor left. With a gesture he waved aside the two officers, and, bracing his foot on the running-board, reached into the tonneau, put his arms round the man huddled in one corner, and carried him unaided up the flight of steps to the porch.

There was something in the clerk's manner as he strode with his burden into the house that made the watchers fall back and leave his path clear. Easing the injured man into the leather armchair before the living-room fireplace, he turned and faced the company.

"Where's Burby?"

"What's the row, son?" O'Meara had suavely ingratiated himself into the scene.

The clerk frowned.

"Who are you?"

"Fair enough. Allow me."

Jones made no move to take the card. His eyes swept it from a distance.

"Got you here pretty quick, didn't they?" sneeringly.

"You're wrong, boy—you're wrong. As far as I'm concerned, Central Office doesn't know this thing's happened." O'Meara waved his hand to include the One Pine Inn and its tragedy. "I'm in New Hampshire on something different—a private matter. But I can help you if you'll give me a chance."

"When your help's wanted, it'll be asked." Jones turned to the others. "Where's Burby?" And then, catching sight of the coroner pushing his way through the crowd, "I've brought back your man." With a swing from the hips, he indicated Bill standing sullenly between the two officers. "Clear the room and give him a chance to tell what he knows."

When all but the little group most interested had been eliminated, Mr. Burby turned to the chauffeur.

"You know anything you say will be used against you," he warned. "Do you want to talk?"

"Say—do I want to talk?" Bill lounged forward. "You couldn't stop me wid a muzzle. Them two birds ain't got nothin' on me. He's guilty"—glowering at the man in the armchair. "Guilty as hell—and they're tryin' to make me the goat!"

The door opened, and O'Meara, who had gone out a moment before, unobserved, appeared with the manacled Italian.

"If there's any talking to be done—here's some one who ought to be in on it," he suggested mildly.

At sight of the Italian, the man in the chair stiffened. His eyes blazed.

"So," he began fiercely, "so you did not go away—" And then, turning to the policemen: "Officers, *this* is the man you want. If it had not been for him, she——"

The Italian made a gesture of denial with his manacled hands.

"Stop!" he shrilled. "Stop before I keel you! I have suffer enough. I shall tell all—all! I am Quaglino—Julio Quaglino—of the Opera. I sing. The lady—the poor, poor lady"—he made a hurried sign of the cross—"is dead, but I no am responsible. It is—" His eyes shifted from the stranger to Jones and back to the stranger. "You no hear? This clerk, this innkeeper's porter, this *lazarone*—already he make the full confession."

A dazed wonderment fell upon the stranger. As one who gropes blindly through the darkness, he took a hesitating step toward Jones, his haggard face white.

"What's he saying?" he whispered.

A moment of silence followed.

IT WAS Jones who spoke first.

"Search Bill!" he commanded sharply.

The chauffeur drew back with a snarl.

"You leave me be!" he began. "You took my gun from me at the station. You can't frisk me twice."

But the two officers were upon him. From inside his shirt they drew a long, flat linen package fastened like a bandage under his armpits, ripped it open and spilled the contents on the table. The missing diamonds!

"That don't mean nothin'!" Bill shouted in a fury at his captors. "I got 'em off'n her"—indicating Natalie. "They was in the car out in the barn. She found 'em and he"—he gestured toward the stranger—"seen her from the hay-loft. He told me to nip 'em if I could—didn't you, boss?"

The stranger nodded.

"In part, what he says is true. I did tell him to get the diamonds. But he came back empty-handed, told me he didn't succeed."

"That's enough to fix you, bo." The police officer brought out another pair of handcuffs, adding, with a grin, as he slipped them on the chauffeur's wrists, "These here are all the jewelry you'll get out of this party, my bucko."

"That's O. K." Bill made no attempt to resist. "But you can't hang no murder on me. Here's where I blow the whole works."

He looked from one to the other of the three men with a meaning leer and threw out his chest. Beginning with the afternoon of the storm, he told of his visit to Lakeport in search of a man to mend the broken chimney. Drenched to the skin, his mission unsuccessful, he had stopped at a roadhouse, had scraped up acquaintance with another storm-stayed straggler—a man servant on a fishing-trip with his master—had rustled drinks for both and listened to the grievances of his new-found friend. His new friend's master was an unreasonable guy, wanted to stay on the water every minute. New York swells were all nuts. Bill agreed with this classification, and, moved by the servant's distress and two glasses of gin, volunteered his own quota of evidence on the subject. At the One Pine Inn, where he worked, there was one of these very swells—a woman with two dogs—two little yapping mutts, one as white as snow, the other coal-black. She fed them out of a silver dish and insisted on taking them to bed with her. To Bill's surprise, his new friend hit the ceiling, demanded details, wanted to know what the woman looked like, when she had come, and who was with her.

"He said," the chauffeur continued, "that he would bet his Ingersoll she was the master's wife, doing the 'when the cat's away the mouse will play' act, and that, if we handled our cards right, we could shake her down for a bunch of dough. And so I agreed that if he'd come across the lake that night in their motor-boat, I'd give him a chance to lamp the dame on the q. t. He slipped me a yellow-back to bind the bargain, and I come home."

At this point in the narrative, the stranger, who had been listening intently, dropped back into the big chair and shaded his face with his hand.

"I couldn't get over to Mink Harbor that night," Bill went on. "Things got so lively around here; so I sent John. When the kid come back, instead of the guy I was lookin' for, he brought him." He pointed at the figure in the armchair, and, turning to the others: "Say; get wise. That face at the window was his face. It was him that caused all the row."

There was a murmur from the group, a quick fitting-together of this perplexing puzzle. Bill supplied more of the missing pieces—the hours just preceding the woman's death. The stranger had escaped detection by running to the back of the house where the porch was on a level with the ground and, from there, up the hillside. Later, he had made his way to the barn, and

Bill had promised to bring him back to the inn after all the others had gone to bed.

"He acted pretty wild, and I figured he'd better wait and get calmed down." Bill cleared his throat. "You see, I didn't want no mess. The lights in the lower part of the house stayed lit, and at half-past one he wouldn't wait no longer. So we come over. When we looked in the window, there was the lady sittin' in front of the fire. I couldn't have planned it better myself. He went in alone—I stayed on the porch. In about five minutes out he come again, tremblin' with rage, and said he was goin' to find the wop, Julio What's-his-name, here. And off he went in the wind and rain straight for the Mink Harbor road, me follerin'. Of course, he didn't know the way, and the first thing he done was to go flat over an old tree-stump. He could hardly get up. His leg was game, anyway—said he had been wounded in France. And there he was. I got him to the back porch, but he wouldn't go in the house. And finally I offers to put him up in the barn till daybreak. He agreed, and I went into the house for some rugs I'd seen in the office, to make him a shake-down. As I come in at the door, the madam, all in her red coat, comes out of the livin'-room and wants to know where me friend is. When I wouldn't tell her, she gets lippy, and me and her has words. She follows me out on the porch, tellin' me what I am and what I ain't, till I shakes her off and goes down the steps, pretendin' I'm headin' for the road. By and by I sneaks back to help the gent over to the barn; but he wasn't where I left him. The house was all dark—somebody had put out the lights. So I goes over to the help's quarters, thinkin' I'd turn in, but somehow" —Bill paused—"somehow I couldn't get him out of me mind. And so I went out to the barn, and there he was, lumped in a corner, all dazed-like. He sure looked all in. I sat with him, and never knew till the mornin' what had happened. And that's the truth, so help me Gawd!"

THERE was a hush of expectancy. All those in the living-room thought to see the stranger spring to his feet, to hear denials, expostulation. They were disappointed. The figure in the armchair did not move. So still was the bowed head that another thought stirred them. Could he be—had he——

One of the officers sprang forward. But at the touch of his hand, the stranger looked up and, motioning him away, rose painfully.

"When I left here this morning," he began in a voice that spoke of mental and physical prostration, "I thought I could, for my little girl's sake, cover this up. I see now that it was a false move. No good can come of running away. Better a thousand times have stayed and faced the issue in the first place. I am Clayton Hitchcock, and I am not guilty of my wife's death. Mrs. Hitchcock and I have been married for five years. I was a widower with one child when I met her. We have not been happy, but I had no thought of killing her. I came up here on this fishing-trip to be alone, to have a chance to think things out, and"—with a suggestion of bitterness in the words—"I should probably have gone back, ignorant of all that has happened, if it had not been for my man, Jacques. You have heard how he planned to blackmail my wife. His plan fell through, because I had that very afternoon received a telegram apprising me of my wife's flight. When Jacques heard that I intended to return to New York immediately, he told me of what he had learned. I came over here to make sure that he was—to prove to myself that he was lying." With a visible effort, he went on: "My interview with my wife was not satisfactory. She would not return with me to New York. She was determined to seek a future on the stage—the bait this Quaglino had used to ensnare her—and announced her intention of continuing on her way to Canada and sailing with him for France. She told me something I did not understand at the moment—something about already having had her plans interfered with—about Quaglino having gone to Mink Harbor for the night. I left her, my one thought to find this man and force him to give up his scheme. I never had the opportunity to convince my wife—to speak to her again."

It was O'Meara who broke the silence following Hitchcock's statement.

"And now, son," he remarked, turning affably to Jones, "all the returns are in. Every county heard from—except yours. Suppose you start by giving us your name?"

The clerk took a deep breath.

"Jones," he said. "Alfred Jones."

O'Meara smiled.

"You don't look like no Alfred, son, nor, by the same token, no Jones. Try again."

"Sorry," was the curt reply. "That's all the name I have."

O'Meara's shrug signified that a name more or less was a matter of small importance.

"It's been said that you confessed to this murder. Is that true?"

"No." Jones eyed him coolly. "I simply said that when Quaglino left the house, he left me with Mrs. Hitchcock."

"I see." O'Meara ran his hand over his smoothly oiled head. "And what was your particular reason for accepting the burden of guilt, then? You knew how that half-admission was going to sound, didn't you? Come"—as the clerk's jaw set stubbornly—"out with it!"

A grunt from Bill, a nervous cough from the Italian. Hitchcock stirred uneasily.

It was a full moment before Jones spoke.

"I'd had a row with Quaglino. He was acting like a dog and I beat him up. Look at his lip—you can see where I cut it. That's why he left the house. He's a rotter, but—he's not a murderer. What else——"

A sound from the hall that drew every eye. With a bang, the door flew open. Miss Merilda appeared on the threshold with a pale-faced, red-eyed girl.

"I've brought you a witness—a most unwilling witness," the old lady announced. "Took me an hour to make her see reason, but here we are! No use going any further with your speculations. Lucy Painter *knows* how Mrs. Hitchcock came to her death. She's been afraid to tell for fear you'd hold her responsible. Go on"—with a little push—"tell 'em what happened."

WITH faltering steps, the girl walked toward the group.

It was O'Meara who saw her courage oozing. He stepped forward and took the limp hand in his own.

"Why, it's my little friend Lucy—Lucy Painter"—drawing her skilfully into the circle. "So there *is* something more you can tell us. Well, by all means let's have it."

The girl pinched a fold of her dress between her fingers and rolled it over and over.

"I—I—" she began. "I seen the lady——"

"Say 'Mrs. Hitchcock'," put in the coroner. "We all know who she was now."

"Yes, sir." The girl gulped nervously. "I seen Mrs. Hitchcock go out the front door after Bill. Bill had some blankets. Mrs. Hitchcock ran after him. She was angry—real angry. I waited a minute, but she didn't come back. I knew it was raining—she was going to spoil her red coat. I was sorry. I went out after her." A pause. The Painter girl seemed suddenly to realize the prominence of her position.

"Yes—and then?" O'Meara prompted soothingly.

"Mrs. Hitchcock was standing right outside the door, near the edge of the porch—close to the edge. The light from the hall showed her coat flapping in the wind. She had her back turned. She was looking out into the dark, toward the road." Suddenly the girl began to cry. "Oh, don't make me tell it!" she wailed. "Don't make me!"

"Yes, yes; you must go on." It was Miss Merilda who spoke.

"I went out," the girl continued. "I went out. The wind was making a lot of noise. I guess Mrs. Hitchcock didn't hear me. I touched her. I was going to ask her to come in, but—when she felt my hand on her arm, she gave a sort of cry and jumped back. She"—Lucy put her hand over her eyes—"she went right over the edge of the porch. I heard her hit the ground, and I waited. Then I called, but she didn't answer me. It was awful—awful! I went down. There she lay, with her head on one of the stones—the stones where the nasturtiums grow. I tried to lift her up, and she just flopped over like a rag doll. I knew she was dead. I ran up to call some one, and then I began to think. I was afraid they'd say I pushed her. So I locked the front door and put out the light and—and went to bed."

For the first time in days, Natalie Mallinson felt her muscles relax. The room with its ring of white, staring faces receded into a soft, comfortable gray blur. She closed her eyes and steadied herself with one hand on the back of a chair. This, she told herself, was not the way people behaved in a great crisis. They usually did something, said something, something important. She——

"And now, Lucy Painter"—it was the voice of O'Meara, no longer suave, caressing.

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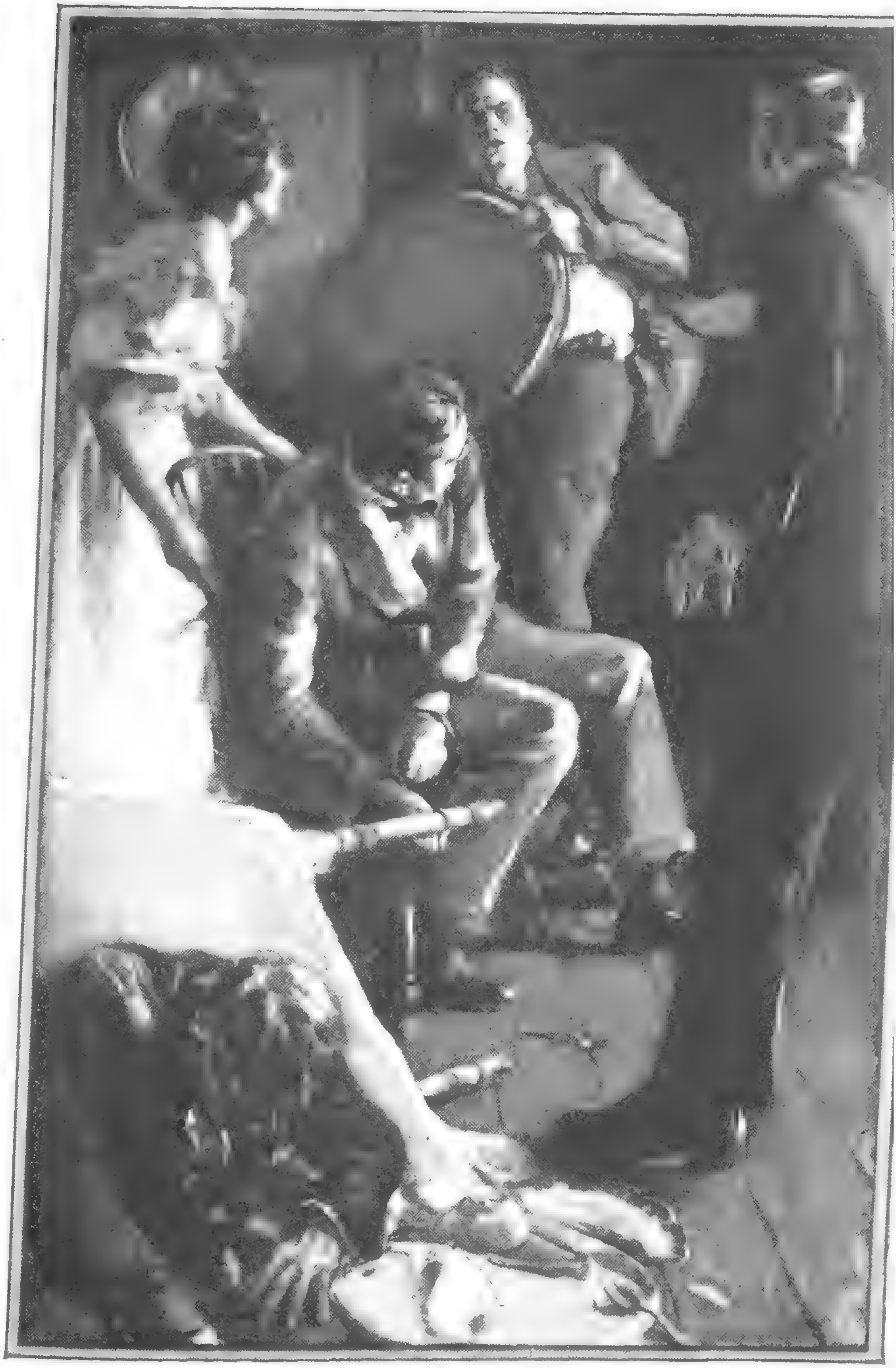

Holding a large metal tea-tray in front of him as a shield, Jones retreated cautiously toward the door. "Stand back," he ordered, "all of you!"

but with a note of sternness, the veiled hint of a threat—"and now, Lucy Painter, will you give us the name of the person who induced you to tell this ingenious lie and just what you expect to get out of it?"

Hitchcock leaned forward and glared at the detective.

"What are you trying to insinuate? What do you mean by that question?"

"I mean"—O'Meara dug his fists into his trousers pockets, as though he feared he might be tempted to use them—"I mean, Mr. Clayton Hitchcock, that your wife's body was found in the old horse-trough that Miss Pringle calls a bird-bath, fully forty feet away from the place where this girl says she saw her fall. There is some part of Lucy Painter's story that doesn't wash, and I want to know why. Have you any objection?"

The broker flinched, opened his mouth as though to answer, abruptly changed his mind and sank back into the armchair.

Was this guilt? Was this the way a man looked when he had committed a crime? Natalie Mallinson felt a sudden pity for the unhappy human being before her—for all the unhappy human beings who had made mistakes and had their world turn its back upon them. Mr. Burby's voice, with its high, thin querulousness, cut into the silence that followed the detective's words.

"This proceeding is out of order. It's not regular. I am the coroner—I am in charge here. You had no right to overstep my authority. I insist that these four men be detained, Mr. Officer"—he addressed one of the policemen—"until a thorough and complete investigation can be made into the truth of their statements." He indicated that the room was to be cleared.

LATER, Natalie Mallinson found herself with Aunt Merilda, Miss Pringle and the rest of the guests swept ignominiously into the hall. Her first thought was of the girl, Lucy Painter. But she had been detained with the four men. Was her story true or wasn't it? Aunt Merilda had vouched for her; why didn't she stand by her? But Aunt Merilda, whose activities had been so long confined to the upper part of the house, was now as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. She had flitted away, and no one could tell in which direction she had gone.

O'Meara proved the one substantial anchor in the troubled sea of suspicion. He came out of the living-room presently, his brows drawn, his teeth worrying at the end of a big black cigar. At sight of Natalie, the corners about his eyes wrinkled pleasantly.

"Ah, Miss Mallinson!" he said. "The very person I was looking for. Care to talk things over with me?"

Once more she found herself marching the porch shoulder to shoulder with a man, but this time it was the rotund detective who guided her steps, and if she reacted to his words, it was because they brought to her the thought of some one else.

"This boy," O'Meara began, "this Jones boy, as he chooses to call himself, is a precious young fool. He's bent on wearing the halo of sacrifice. I've thrown the hooks into both him and Hitchcock; but—well"—with a shrug—"I may be wrong. I've a notion that Jones thinks he's squaring up an old account by shielding the other man at this time. Say—have you any idea who this boy is?"

Natalie put out a hand.

"Don't!" she pleaded. "Let him tell me himself—when he wants to."

"Maybe he'll never want to." O'Meara puffed at the cigar. "He's been behaving like a lunatic for a year and a half. And he's so used to it by this time that he rather enjoys it. His father engaged me to hunt him up. That's why I'm in New Hampshire. Old Man Channing"—the detective smiled—"'Drydock' Channing—being a New Yorker, I suppose you've heard of him—has two obsessions: his ships and his son Schuyler. The boy's a chip off the old block. His dad was a hellion, and the youngster has always gone him one better. Princeton still smokes from the hot trail he left behind him. The father tried to keep him out of the war by sending him to China, but Schuyler outwitted him—joined the Aviation Corps—got through without a scratch, wilder than ever. His infatuation for this Hitchcock woman made him come his first real cropper. There's nothing bad about the kid; he's sound inside. After he'd gotten wise to the kind of woman he was worshiping, the reaction set in. He'd already split with his father on her account, and in his disillusionment he tried to split with his whole world. He'd always hit the high spots; so, naturally, when he went down, there wasn't a spot low enough to satisfy him. This Miss Pringle picked him up in the gutters of Boston."

"Say"—blowing a smoke ring with meditative care—"do you believe in fate? I do. All this that's happened up here just had to happen to make a man out of a harum-scarum boy. The only thing now is"—the detective looked out over the broad green hillside—"how can we—you and I—bring him to his senses? I don't want him to be arrested; I don't want to have his name branded with even a hint of murder. That's why I nailed that girl's story. Sooner or later there'd 'a' been a show-down—part truth never wears as well as a good husky lie. Better to have it out here and now, while there's a chance to clear up everything. Mrs. Hitchcock did go off that porch. I've known that right from the start. You see, after I'd talked with Lucy Painter and talked with your aunt, I put on my thinking-cap. To make a long story short, I found the jagged rock where Mrs. Hitchcock's head struck; but—I couldn't help asking myself, as the boys used to say when they were joking—did she fall or was she pushed? And if she fell, who put her body into the bird-bath, and why? If it turns out that this Hitchcock went loco and threw his wife off the porch, young Channing will try to do just what he did before—pull suspicion down on his own head. Quixotic, I grant you, but—mind—if he felt responsible when he only thought Hitchcock was somewhere in the offing, he feels doubly responsible now, having brought him back when he had almost made his escape. We can't make any of our young friend's motives seem rational—because they're not rational. He needs a good hiding, or he needs a—" The detective stole a glance at Natalie. "But that's something different again yet. Now, about Bill—we've given him a regular third degree, but we can't pick a flaw in his story. I think he's telling the truth."

Natalie's fingers twisted into an untidy string the wisp of cambric that had been her handkerchief.

Once more round the porch and back in silence before she spoke.

"This Ole Peterson—what did you do with him? You're sure he had no part in it?"

O'Meara tossed away the stump of his cigar and reached for another.

"Sobered him up and turned him over to his wife, Tillie. She's a jailer he can't escape. But he had nothing to do with Mrs. Hitchcock's death. Wasn't near the house that night. I've investigated thoroughly. His alibi's sound. He—well, what is it?"

For Natalie had stopped, her fingers digging into his arm.

"What about the diamonds? Who put them in the car? That handkerchief"—and then, her lip trembling—"there was a 'J' in the corner——"

"No." O'Meara shook his head. "The 'J' doesn't stand for 'Jones.' The boy didn't carry his masquerade to any such extreme. The handkerchief belongs to Julio Quaglino. I've run that clue to earth. After Channing had given him the beating of his life and ordered him off the place, Mr. Julio took the only revenge that offered—sneaked round the back way and swiped the diamonds. His lip was cut, which accounts for the stains on the handkerchief, and, I don't doubt, for those on the one the clerk used later in the bathroom. With the diamonds secure, Quaglino tried to take the car, too. Thorough he was, if he was anything. Unfortunately for his plans, the self-starter was out of commission, and while he was poking round, trying to see what was the matter, he was interrupted by Hitchcock and Bill. Got away before he recognized them or they him, but he was obliged to leave the jewels in the car. Never did get them, as you know, though he hung round until he succeeded in getting himself arrested. He's confessed all that, and I think we can practically eliminate him from the list of suspects. Nope; no matter how I turn or twist it, it always comes back to just two people—Schuyler Channing and Clayton Hitchcock. One or the other can clear this thing up. We've got to make 'em talk, girl; we've got to make 'em talk."

BUT, after all, it was Miss Merilda and not Channing or Hitchcock who did the talking. While Natalie and O'Meara tramped the porch and racked their brains for schemes to make the erstwhile clerk clear himself, the energetic old lady had been busy elsewhere.

Six o'clock found her at the office door, her silk skirt rustling, her eyes snapping.

"Ah! Just in time." With an undulating wave of her left hand, she indicated the two policemen, belted and equipped for their journey to Lakeport, the four prisoners lined up between them. "I see, Mr. Burby, you are taking no chances. Quite a tidy parade you will make through town. Isn't there some one else you could arrest? Think again. A woman, perhaps—to add a touch of color, a little spice?"

Mr. Burby frowned. His experience with Miss Merilda had made him as cautious about handling her as though she were a prickly pear.

"Excuse me, ma'am—" he began. But his tormentor cut him short.

"There's no sense in bedeviling you any more. I brought you a peace-offering—the truth at last—the truth, or I am no Tillinghast. Come, now; at least credit me with being persistent."

Mr. Burby flung up his hands. Taking the gesture as a signal to begin, Miss Merilda gazed triumphantly upon her audience.

"First"—she put one forefinger against the other as she checked off her points—"first, Lucy Painter was not lying. Mrs. Hitchcock did fall off the porch. Second, the fall killed her. Third"—a pause; Miss Merilda lowered her voice—"it was Mr. Hitchcock who startled the princess-woman, as my niece called her. It was his sudden appearance which made her take the misstep that sent her to her death. Lucy had reached the porch just in time to see it. Fourth"—here the voice rose again—"after Clayton Hitchcock had paid the girl to keep silent, had left his wife lying there, had run away, it was Sammy Todd—poor, foolish Sammy Todd—prowling in the early morning, who picked the body up and put it into the horse-trough. Why, nobody but Sammy knows, and he can't explain. And now," finished Miss Merilda, "you can thrash it over as much as you like, but these are the facts and you can't change them."

Half an hour later, as O'Meara bade good-by to Mr. Burby, he looked up the hill and saw two figures climb into the sunset on the flat rock and pause on the crest. The girl was Natalie Mallinson, the man Schuyler Channing.

"Huh!" The detective grinned and reached for one of his black cigars. "I bet I can tell old 'Drydock' the next piece of foolishness his young hopeful will be up to."

TO MR. WARBURTON MALLINSON, 324
Park Avenue, New York.

MY DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW:

There is no excuse for writing me a letter like that. I have torn it up and thrown the pieces into my waste-basket. Natalie is free, white, and old enough to have the vote. As you will perhaps remember, I never did approve of Andy Herrick, with his white-rabbit soul and his small pink eyes.

You ask me, like the good Presbyterian you are, what in God's name Natalie sees in Schuyler Channing, and I can only answer, my dear brother-in-law, that I haven't the remotest idea what any woman sees in any man.

Why cavil about a little thing like distance? Thank your lucky stars you *are* three hundred miles away and don't have to get hourly bulletins from the love-market. I've listened to eulogies until my ears ache.

It would appear that you have already met your son-to-be—five years ago aboard the *Empress Something-or-other*, coming back from China. Frankly, Warburton, I always thought that story of a derelict and a native crew that thought they were being torpedoed by a submarine was just one of your yarns. But Natalie assures me that Schuyler Channing was the hero of the occasion—that he prevented a mutiny and kept the crew from seizing the life-boats. Though what's so heroic in throwing a few Chinamen overboard is more than I can see. Personally, after the experience I had last year with Oriental servants, I would be glad to know that all of them were at the bottom of the ocean.

It may interest you to know, however, that the boat you were on is one of the Java-Pacific Line operated by Mr. Channing, senior, and that Schuyler was stoking his way back from China to outwit his father, who had purposely stranded him there to keep him out of the army. So you see what you are coming to. Natalie and he under one roof—you won't have an idle moment, which is just as well.

No; there is absolutely no use in your coming up here. It is too late; you can't do anything about it. Besides, I might as well confess the truth—we are all in quarantine. Chicken-pox is not as amusing as it sounds. I have been in bed for a week, and two of the other guests came down yesterday. If this is an adventure, then I'm going to spend the rest of my days darning socks. My love to the family.

Yours, through force of circumstance,
MERILDA TILLINGHAST.

THE END

NOTE—Turn to page 5 and begin the new mystery serial, "The Pointed Tower," by Vance Thompson.

The Dopester

Ever Think What an Animal-Trainer Could Do to an Enemy, if He Chose to Use the Tricks of His Trade for Venal Purposes?

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

LOOKING back on Tony Jereau and what happened after he came to the World's Consolidated, about the best description that Luke Martin and me were ever able to figure out for him was that he was just plain oily. Likable? Gosh! I never seen anybody with his faculty for making folks fall for him. We'd heard of him before he came over to the show with his mixed lion-and-tiger act—sort of vaguelike things which told that he was a good animal-man and that he sure knew how to put on the stuff so the audience liked it; but that was about all. Of course, he had the usual "Captain" in front of his name, just like everybody else who handles animal acts, but it didn't seem to stick.

Fact is, Tony Jereau was the kind of a dark-skinned, black-haired, brown-eyed, tall, pleasant young fellow who simply swept you off your feet. As I say, Luke and me liked him, and yet there were times when we wondered whether it was real friendship or just some sort of a strange hypnotism that he'd worked on us that made us tag after him. He could talk about pretty near every country in the world in a sort of off-hand manner, but left us absolutely in the dark as to when he'd been there, who he'd been with, or what for. A week after he'd come to the show, we felt like we'd known him since he'd been a kid; but for all that, we hadn't even learned where he spent his winters when the show closed. And the funny thing was that you didn't think of it. Luke and me might never have thought of it if it hadn't been for Mary.

Maybe me and Luke are a bit henny; some folks have even said so, but it never ruffled us any. We've always felt this way—that we were old and lonesome, without anybody that we could really call our own, and that if we could keep our weather-eye out for the young folks that we'd fastened our affections on, it'd help us from remembering that the Big Gate wasn't so terribly far off for either of us, and that perhaps when we did go through—if we acted right and tried to make the way smooth for somebody else—they might be a bit sorry that we were gone. That always helps a lot when you're sort of off by yourself in life.

That's one reason we'd cabbaged onto Mary Barker, even when she was a little kid round the World's Consolidated. The same way with Tom Mason. Both of 'em were orphans. Luke had carried Mary in his arms, and I had carried Tom the night of the big wreck, and together, in the days that followed, we'd found the way to break it to them that they didn't have any fathers or mothers any more, but that the show-folks, and especially Mr. Harrison, the owner, would see that they always had a home with the World's Consolidated. Then, in after-years, we had taught Tom all we knew about animals and how to train them, while Mary helped out in the ballet and sort of acted as handy girl for old Mother Hall, the wardrobe mistress, and finally got to riding menage in the high-school acts. Then they both got grown up, and it wasn't any time until Tom was giving her the education we'd given him—a kind of second-hand proposition that ended up with her putting on a dog-and-pony act in the end ring while Tom worked the leopards at the opposite side of the tent. That's the way things stood when Mr. Harrison brought Tony Jereau over with his mixed lion-and-tiger spectacle, and then——

WELL then, things changed. Not all of a sudden, of course. It just happened—one day after the matinée. The crowds were gone. In the center ring, the Hobalero Family was trotting the rosin-backs, or ring-horses, around and starting a job that would last for several years—the training of a youngster whose lot in life was to learn everything that his father and mother knew, invent a few things for himself and then, in circuses of days to come, to carry on the name of Hobalero. Down at the other end of the big top, a couple of canvas-men had roped off one of the stages and were settling up a quarrel of the morning with the gloves, while the rest of the big-top crew crowded round to pick favorites and to make bets on who'd bloody the other's nose first. Over at the band-stand, a few of the windjammers were practising up on some of the new professional copies that had just come in from New York, while round the hippodrome track, little groups of performers were strolling along toward the marquee, or gathering on the reserved seats, the men to play cards, the women to sew. It was the usual afternoon diversion of the big family of the World's Consolidated, and, of course, Luke and me were mixing in on it. Our work was done until night, and everything made ready against the time when, after the evening performance, the whistle of the boss canvas-man would order the menagerie top to flutter down and the cages travel to the trains for the rattling, hurrying rush to a new town and a new show-stand.

So, as I say, everything was set with us, and we had moseyed into the big top to sort of look in on the afternoon amusements of the folks who made the show. But our attention wasn't on the grudge-fight down at the end stage or the riding lessons of the Hobalero family. Instead, we flopped to the ground near the steel arena in the ring nearest the menagerie connection, and sat there watching Tom Mason as he brought his leopards out from the cage and then called to Mary to come in and join him.

It had been going on for a couple of weeks—this extra performance of the leopards—first of all because Tom wanted to teach Mary all he knew, and secondly because they'd rather been framing up a little partnership act of their own, once Mary had gotten the hang of putting cat beasts through their paces. Of course, Luke and me had been interested—and why not? Weren't they both our kids, in a way?

So we sat there, calling a suggestion through the bars, or jumping up and grabbing a feeding-fork once in a while to fend off a cat when it got too rambunctious. Then we turned at the sight of somebody who'd walked casually to the door of the arena and called within. It was Tony Jereau, smiling and engaging as usual, and waiting with his hand on the leather strap until Tom should give him permission to enter.

"Mind if I intrude?" he called through the bars, and the two turned. Tom laughed.

"What's the idea?"

"Nothing—if there's any objection. But I've got a few little things up my sleeve about leopards that I thought maybe you didn't know. Any kick against me coming in and telling you about them?"

"Of course not!" Tom laughed and looked at Mary. "We don't mind, do we?"

She gazed up at him with her big, childish eyes, then turned toward Tony.

"Do you really know anything about leopards that Tom doesn't know?"

He chuckled at that.

"I wouldn't be sure." There was a lot of implied compliments in the tone. "From what I've seen of Tom, he's about as good as they make 'em. But these are a few little tricks that I learned in the country where leopards come from. It isn't any reflection on Tom, I assure you," came with a smile and a wave of the hand. "It's—well, maybe I'd better not come in."

"But we want you." Tom had just run a cat back to its pedestal and half turned, toying with his whip. "I'm grateful for any tip I can get. Come on."

And Tony went, while the rest of us gathered closer to the arena and listened and watched, without one of us feeling in the slightest way that Tony had butted in. It was mighty square and decent of him to be willing to part with secrets that are as valuable to an animal-trainer as gold to a miser. And, what's more, he had 'em.

Before the afternoon was over, the outside of the arena was crowded, by roughnecks, animal-men, pony punks, performers and every one else who possibly could be interested in a lot of things they never had heard before about animals. Tony knew what he was talking about. He told about the leopards of Africa, and how their natures differed according to the part of the continent that they came from. He talked about Asiatic leopards and Malaysian ones and—well, it was just like taking a college course in animals. Luke and me had thought we were pretty good—of course, we'd gotten our education under the canvas tops of a circus. When we listened to Tony, we figured that we didn't know anything about animals at all.

It led to the natural thing. The next afternoon, Tony went back into the arena with Tom and Mary, and the next after that. It wasn't any time until he had the two of them simply following him round, like kids begging for a story, waiting for the next lecture on jungle beasts and how to train them. Soon the companionship extended beyond the bars of the steel arena; you could see the three of them wandering across the circus lot toward town when the rehearsal was over, or sitting side by side in the "grease joint," as the snack-stand at the train is called, eating a night lunch before the "high-ball" order sounded and the journey began to the next town.

FOR a couple of weeks this continued, and then things took a change. Mary had progressed a lot—it just seemed that every word that Tony spoke sank in and found root in that girl's brain. He had taught the leopards a bunch of new tricks, and it wasn't any time until Mary was handling the whole arenaful of cats as calmly and as prettily as though she had worked on the act for years. Then Tony got an idea and put it up to Mr. Harrison, one afternoon when the owner happened to mosey along beside the arena during the rehearsal.

"What's the matter with Miss Barker handling this act by herself now?" he asked. "Anybody can do that dog-and-pony stunt of hers. That would release Tom, and he could come in and help me with the big act. You'd be willing, wouldn't you Tom?"

"Tickled to death!" Tony had hypnotized him just like the rest of us.

The trainer turned back to Mr. Harrison.

"You see, if I could have Tom, that would allow me to add three or four more cats to the act out of the cage-stuff that you've got in the menagerie. I can't do it now, because it's too much for one man to handle. But with Tom—well, we could put on the biggest act that ever was seen under the white tops."

It tickled Tom and Mary. For the man, it meant that the greatest animal-trainer he ever had struck had paid him the compliment of wanting him for an assistant. For Mary, it meant that her Tom had risen to a position where he amounted to more than the ordinary trainers round the show. And for Mr. Harrison, well, it guaranteed a big, spectacular animal act, and of course he gave his consent. As for Luke and me, it made us as happy as bugs in a rug. Hadn't Tom and Mary been our babies; shouldn't we be proud to see them getting along? The world certainly looked rosy all round—and it stayed that way for a month. Then came the clouds.

It was night, a hot night in the last days of May, and the show was cutting across the desert after a blazing afternoon show at Yuma, hurrying along the sandy stretches that lay between the baking sun of Arizona and the soft, perfumed air of the orange belt of California. Luke and me had tried about every place on the train in an effort to keep cool, but it hadn't worked. We had piled out of our bunks in the menagerie-car and laid down on the floor, hoping to get a breath of air, without any luck. We had pulled a mattress out on the vestibule and tried to stretch out there, but our heads hung over at one side of the train and our feet at the other. So we did the natural thing—dressed and then sneaked through the coaches toward the flat cars, there to pile a bit of canvas under a parade-wagon and flop down.

A breeze swept the train. It was cool and comfortable. Luke dozed, and I did the same, but it didn't last long. The train pulled onto a siding to wait for the limited to pass, while we awoke to swelter again. It was then that we heard the door of the sleeping-coach open just a few feet away and some one step out on the platform. It was Mary, and we were about to call some joking remark to her when the door clicked for a second time and she turned with a little exclamation of fright, only to laugh when she saw it was Tony Jereau.

"I—I thought some one was following me," she said, and Tony smiled.

"You thought correctly. I am."

"But——"

"It's all I've done since the first day I saw you—follow you," came softly as he stepped beside her. "That's why I've come out here."

"I don't understand."

"I'm trying to find the words to tell you. I guess I might as well say it in the only way possible. I love you, Mary."

"Oh!" She drew away, and Luke nudged me quickly, excitedly. Here was something that we hadn't looked for. Neither had Mary, from the way she was acting. Tony went on,

"And I've been hoping, Mary, that perhaps——"

"Please don't!"

"Is there any harm in it?" His voice was as soft as the touch of a spring breeze. "Why shouldn't I love you? I've been all over the world, Mary, and I've searched—always, it seems, I've searched for one person——"

"But please—please, Tony—you mustn't! I've got to think about Tom."

"Tom?" He stared at her. "Do you mean—" Then the tone lowered. "I didn't know."

Mary turned to him quickly.

"Why, I thought everybody knew about Tom and me. It's been as natural for us, Tony, as life itself. Why"—and she laughed softly with the remembrance—"we've been sweethearts, I think, from the day we were born. We've never even thought about anything except that we would be married some day."

"Forgive me." He took her hand. "I—I didn't know."

"Of course you didn't, Tony. And even if you did, you had a right to ask. But I'm sorry just the same. Everything's been so wonderful since you came on the show—you've simply given us a new lease on life. The things you've taught us and the opportunities you've given us have made the future so much bigger and brighter and we've been so grateful. I guess"—and she laughed—"that we think more of you than any one else we ever knew."

"Then you don't utterly despise me? After what I've said—after trying to come between you and Tom? Of course I didn't know; but, just the same, it wasn't——"

"Despise you? Whoever heard of such a thing? If—if you'll take it in the right way—and I know you will—I—well, next to Tom, there isn't any one——"

She didn't finish, but stood staring out into the shadows and brightness of the moonlight. Tony came closer, and we saw him take her hand. Then he bowed and kissed it and, still holding it close to his lips, looked up at her.

"That means the world to me, Mary," came at last. "May I tell you that I have understood it—in just the way you meant? To-morrow, if you'll allow me, I want to do the manly thing. I want to go to Tom and tell him the truth, and I want to congratulate him, just so that he'll know I hadn't tried to be a sneak. May I?"

She nodded, a happy little smile playing about her lips, and once more he kissed her hand. Then, as the limited passed and the circus train began to move onward again, she held out her hand to him once more and went within the coach. Then——

Then we stared—at a man gone mad. The shadows of the moonlight, playing on his distorted face, had converted it into a fiendish, vicious, venomous thing—features that had taken on the ferocity of the animals that he trained. Above the roar of the train we could hear him talking to himself in a strange, guttural language, the words of which we could not understand. But the tones were enough.

His hands were clenched—once he brought them, clawlike and grasping, before his face as he paced the short space of the open vestibule. Then they swept outward and down. He whirled; the door slammed, and he was gone. I turned to Luke Martin.

"What do you make of it?"

"Enough for us to keep our eyes open, George, and our mouths closed. That man had murder in his face."

BUT the next day we almost looked back upon it as a bad dream. Tony kept his word. What was more, he made his confession in the open, where Luke and me and Mary and Mr. Harrison and a bunch of the fellows could hear him. The way he told it made us all laugh—about how the joke was on him, and how he didn't have any more sense than to fall in love when even a blind man could see that there wasn't a chance in the world. It was a hit, and everybody liked Tony more than ever; even Luke and me had a hard time keeping our eyes open when the afternoon show came and Tom and Tony went into the big center arena to work the mixed act. And nothing happened.

A COUPLE of weeks went by, in which the three got chummier than ever. Then, one day, just as Luke and me were finishing the job of picketing the elephants, we looked up to find Tony standing beside us, fingering a ten-dollar bill.

"Boys," he began, "I wonder if you'd like to make a little extra money."

"Don't know." Luke scratched his head. "What doing?"

"Helping Tom with the cat act. I've got a chance to get hold of a feature. But to do it I'll have to go away for a week or so. That will leave Tom in the arena alone with the mixed act, and it's too big for one man. Suppose you boys would be game to help him."

"Sure!"

And it was settled. What's more, it put to sleep a lot of our suspicions. Tony walked away, and Luke stood staring after him.

"Maybe we're a couple of boobs, George," he said at last. "Either that—or this bird's one slick son of a gun. I'd 'a' sworn that night that he'd take any kind of a chance to cause Tom trouble. Then he comes round and pays us money to help out in a pinch."

"Maybe it was that moonlight on his face that made him look that way," I said.

"Maybe."

So we took Tony's ten dollars with a bit of a guilty feeling, and went into the arena with Tom to help him put the twelve beasts —six lions and six Bengals—through their paces. Nothing happened; the beasts were too well trained. A week passed. Then Tony came back to the show, bringing a new cage with him.

"This is my own little job," he explained, with a laugh, as he stopped Luke and me from going over to remove the sideboards when the den had been rolled down from the freight-car. "I'll take care of this baby for a while. Besides, I don't know much about this cat—and I don't want to take any chances."

So, after that—in fact, through the greater part of the season—the cage didn't even leave the circus train, and Tony was missing from the parade. The manager had given him permission to spend every possible minute down at the new cage in preparation for a surprise-act that, according to the rumors, was going to be the sensation of the circus world. We all tried to find out what it was, but in vain. Tony did his work in the cage itself with the sideboards drawn; and the orders were posted to keep our noses out of the business. Then the secret came out.

It was just two months after the cat's arrival that Tony ordered the cage brought to the arena during the main show and placed at one side. The big act went on, while Tom and he worked the lions and Bengals. One by one, the twelve beasts were herded back into their dens and the other cage brought forward. Tom left. Tony was alone in the arena. He turned toward the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "I'm going to try to give you something that you've never seen before. I take great pleasure in introducing to you the peer of all jungle animals, Rajah, the wrestling tiger!" He whirled then and faced us. "All right, boys!" came his snapping order. "Open the den door and let him come."

We obeyed, staring at each other. A wrestling tiger was something we never had seen before. The door slid open; a great, ugly striped beast crept sinuously forth, dropped to the ground, stood swinging his head slowly from side to side, then, sighting Tony, went toward him. With that, the trainer threw away his whip, turned his back upon the tiger, made a bow to the audience, then, crouching, wheeled in the direction of the big Bengal. A shout came from his lips, and he went to his knees. The next thing we knew the two of them were rolling on the floor of the arena, like wrestlers on the mat, tumbling about and feinting, Tony keeping easily out of the way of the beast's thrusts and the possibility of a stray claw-mark. But as we peered through the steel bars we could see there was little danger—the talons were drawn inward, the paws only great padded bits of flesh. I gasped. I'd seen a lot of things before, but never a playful tiger.

A swerve, and Tony had shoved his arms

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under the shoulders of the beast and, raising, lifted him. Then, while the audience cheered and shouted, while the eyes of us menagerie guys bulged, he wrestled about the ring with the tiger, butting him with his head, reaching up, first with one hand then the other, to slap him on the jowls. Finally, with a great effort, he threw him off. Then—a leap! He was on the tiger's back, riding him round the arena! It brought the audience to its feet. I never heard such cheers and applause as came when Tony opened the door of the cage and half pushed the beast within, then turned to make his bow. He had pulled a triumph, all right, and I said as much to Luke when we got back to the menagerie top. My partner sort of squinted and stared at the ground.

"Did you notice that cat close?" he asked at last.

"Fairly so."

"See anything familiar about him?"

I blinked then.

"Come to think of it, I did. He's scarred up like he'd been shot. Then, too, wasn't there a long mark on his side, like could be made with a hot iron?"

"You said it!" Luke's eyes were narrowed. "I recognized him the minute he went into the ring. That's old Major off the Sisson show."

"By golly! The killer?"

"Well"—and Luke kicked at the straw—"I wouldn't make any affidavit to it, but I'd come darned close to betting a year's salary he's the same one, and if he is, he's already put four trainers in their graves. Mr. Jereau"—he wheeled as Tony came through the connection—"me and George here were just having an argument. Ain't that old Major?"

Tony stopped short, and for a second his face went blank. But if anything was meant by the expression, he sure covered it up.

"Really, I couldn't say," came at last. "But I wouldn't be surprised. I bought him from a museum at Salt Lake, and they evidently didn't care to give me his pedigree."

He walked on, and Luke continued to kick at the straw.

"Same old Major," he mused, when Tony had passed out of hearing. "A four-time killer!"

"Then that's sure a feather in Tony's cap," I said.

"How do you make that out?"

"How? Lor', Luke, if a man can take a cat animal that has killed four men and tame him so that he can maul him round like a kitten—well, I'll say he's a knockout!"

"That all?" Luke had a queer tone to his voice. It made me a bit sore.

"Well, ain't that enough? Gosh! Give a fellow his dues. That's about the biggest thing I ever heard of."

"According to the way you look at it," came grudgingly, and it heated me up more than ever.

"Well, I wouldn't get jealous about it if I were you. What's eating on you, anyway? Can't a guy pull a world-beater of a stunt without you playing the sorehead? You——"

Then Luke looked at me and smiled kind of sarcastically.

"All I've got to say—" he began, then stopped, to stand staring a moment, finally to turn the conversation into ordinary channels. "Better get some more hay for those bulls. Old Snyder'll be eating up the picket-pins in a minute."

I WENT on, wondering what had made him so crabby. I kept wondering about it all night and the next day. Then, along toward afternoon, I moseyed into the animal-tent to find him staring at a small piece of meat that he held in one hand—only to close his fist over it casually as I came up. Just then, Doc Jordan, the show physician, happened along, and Luke started toward him.

"Better grab Doc while I've got a chance," he growled over his shoulder. "Mary's got a headache and wants some asperin."

A minute later they'd gone out under the side wall together and I was back at my work, sort of wondering whether I'd done exactly right in calling Luke names when him and me had been pals as long as we could remember. All of us have our crabby days, and I wondered whether I shouldn't have sided in with him, just for the decency of it and to keep him in a good humor. Then I chuckled, because I knew that by the time he came back, he'd be all over it.

But he wasn't. He was crabbier than ever and it peeved me.

"Get over it!" I snapped. "Can't nobody

get any credit round this show without you being grouchy about it?"

"Grouchy? Who's grouchy? And"—his voice took on an angrier tone than ever—"what business is it of yours, anyhow?"

That finished things with me. I flipped a sharp answer at him and went back to my work, grumbling under my breath. It was the beginning of our first real scrap. What's worse, the thing lasted.

NATURALLY, as time went on, I made things worse by kidding Luke every chance I got and making up all kinds of wild tales about how nutty I was over Tony and what a wonderful guy he was and how everybody on the show sure ought to be grateful to him for figuring out a fine feature like this. Finally it got so that Luke would hardly do much more than grunt when I spoke to him—and even the fact that Tony had taken Tom in on the wrestling-tiger stunt didn't seem to cheer him up any. It tickled Tom and Mary half to death. Tom would work the act in the afternoon show and Tony at night, so that each of them had a play at the applause. And the way Tony looked after that cat! Wouldn't let anybody feed him but himself; even before the train was spotted in the morning, he'd be out and in the cage giving the animal his breakfast. What was more, he broke the usual rules by feeding him in three separate instalments, early in the morning, then just after the parade, and, finally, just after the doors had opened for the evening show. That seemed to make Luke mad, too—to see rules broken. He couldn't keep his eyes off Tony when he went near that cat's cage to dole out the strips of meat.

A month went by. Six weeks, and everything running as slick as grease, with the wrestling act going bigger and bigger every minute. Mr. Harrison had sent on to Chicago for new special billing—everywhere you looked round the towns we played, you could see the twenty-four-sheet stands of a man wrestling a ferocious tiger. And how it packed the people in!

It was something new for the circus—and that's what the folks wanted. Our receipts picked up day after day, and from the way the cheers came at the announcement of the wrestling act, it was easy to tell what the audience had come to see. Bigger and bigger the attraction grew and then——

I stopped short one morning in the menagerie at a growling, half-whining sound from Major's cage. The sideboards were lowered and the beast was pacing up and down—usually he'd just lay around, half asleep, and not even noticing folks when they passed. I turned to old sour-faced Luke, raking straw over by the camel-enclosure.

"What's wrong with the cat?" I asked.

Luke sneered.

"Crying for his master, I guess. He's sick."

"But——"

"Well, why ask me? You're Tony's ballyhoo; I'm not. You ought to know all about him and his pets."

I didn't say anything more, but went on with my work. Matinée-time came with the usual crowds flooding into the big top to see the circus as a background for the one big thing which had pulled them there, the wrestling act. Then Tony showed up, looking pale and weak.

"Going to work the matinée instead of the night show," he said. "Don't think I'll have strength enough if I wait. Tom and I've made a switch for the day."

The performance went on, and the wrestling tiger came forth. But Tony only made a pretense of the act—the cat hardly had come out of its den before Tony had run it back again. Then he weaved out of the arena.

"Didn't have the strength," he announced. "Guess I'd better get back to the cars."

Then he went on, while the cat beast of the wrestling act whined and paced its cage, its call becoming throatier and hoarser, its pace more excited. Once in a while it leaped, staring strangely about it. Then suddenly it settled, crouched, its eyes wide and glaring, its head swinging slowly from side to side. I nodded.

"Guess he's calmed down now."

"Hope so." Luke shrugged his shoulders, and walked away without even looking toward the beast. I finished up my work and took a stroll about town before coming back to the night show. And it was just as I was coming on the circus lot again that I noticed Luke hurrying across on a half-run. He stopped as he came to me and ran a hand across his forehead.

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"Seen Doc?"

"No. Why?"

"I've got to get hold of him. Tony Jereau's too sick to go on to-night."

"Well, what of it? Tom can take his place. I thought it was all fixed up."

"That's it! It was! I've been looking for Doc all afternoon."

"But hasn't he seen Tony already? I thought he gave him a prescription this after——"

"I don't want him for Tony. I want him for myself. Go down to the train and see if he's there."

I went, just in time to find Doc Jordan leaving the cars, and gave him Luke's message. He nodded. Then,

"Suppose you could stay down here with Tony?"

"Sure! Why?"

Doc scratched his head.

"I don't know. Only, I'd like to have somebody around. He's got some funny symptoms. He acts like a man who's been overdosing on strychnine or something—his heart's going about a million a minute. Better keep your eye on him."

"Yes, sir."

Then I went into Tony's car. He was laying half dressed on his bunk, his eyes blazing, queer, red blotches showing in the dark skin of his cheeks.

"Doc says my heart's on the bum," he said, when I sat down beside him. "Glad you're going to stay with me to-night. Tom's going to work the act, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Nothing come up to stop it, has there?"

"No—not that I know of. The cat was pretty restless for a while—Luke said it was grieving for you. But it's settled down now."

"Good!" The eyes seemed to get brighter and I wondered why. Possibly it was his heart. Then, "What time is it?"

"Seven-twenty."

"The act goes on at eight-forty-five. Hope everything's all right."

I told him it would be, that it always had, but it seemed to be on his mind. Every once in a while he'd say something about the tiger, and then ask what time it was. From away off we could hear the music of the circus band—the clock of the big top playing the numbers of the advance concert and announcing the beginning of the show. Eight o'clock came—eight-fifteen. Tony's eyes gleamed more than ever. Eight-thirty, and I noticed that his hands were clenched tight and that a cold sweat was on his forehead. He mumbled something about his heart and clutched at his breast. Then he turned swiftly.

"What's that?"

IT WAS a sound from outside, and both of us had recognized the voice of Tom Mason. I went to the end of the car just in time to see a couple of canvas-men helping him up the steps and into his bunk. He was limping, and I hurried forward to lend a hand. Tom groaned and grinned at the same time.

"Sprained my fool ankle," he told me, "just as I was going into the ring. But it's all right. Mary took my place."

I heard a gasp behind me, and turned to see the face of Tony Jereau, glaring white in the reflection of the car-light. His hands were extended and shaking. His jaw had dropped. He stood there for a second like some horrible, dead image, then, with a sudden, frenzied leap, cleared the steps and started on a reeling run toward the circus lot. A second, and I was beside him, trying to lead him back to the car. But it was useless.

"We've got to get to the lot!" There was a screaming note of fear in his voice. "Hear me—we've got to get to the lot!"

"No; we don't. Everything's all right. Mary's working the act."

"That's it! Help me—no; run ahead—hurry!" He was pushing at me with claw-like hands. "Tell her not to work the wrestling act! Go on!" He was glaring at me with crazed eyes now, and his fists were pounding in a steady succession of weak, aimless blows at my face and breast. "Go on! Do you want to see her killed? Do you want to see her killed?"

"She'll be all right." I was trying my best to pacify him. "She'll——"

"Get to the lot! My God, get to the lot!"

He was like a maniac, struggling with me as I tried to hold him back, biting and fighting in his attempts to break free. From within the cars, the canvas-men, hearing the noise, began to come forth. Then a hobbling figure, which came painfully down the vestibule steps and dragged himself forward—Tom Mason. Jereau whirled to him in a new frenzy.

"Make him turn me loose!" he shouted. "Somebody get up to the lot and tell Mary not to work that wrestling act! Can't you understand—that cat's crazy?"

"But——"

"It's crazy, I tell you!" Fear had taken away every precaution now. "It hasn't had its morphine since yesterday afternoon. It'll go mad the minute she tries to force it into the act. Get up there and stop her—please—please——"

EVERYTHING came to me then—the mysterious days down at the train when the tiger had quieted with Tony's visits, the bit of meat that Luke had held in his hand that day when he walked away with Doc Jordan. I knew now. Luke had been suspicious; he had stolen a piece of the tiger's meat for examination. That tiger, old Major, the killer, had been doped! And now that the drug had been denied it, there could be only one result—death for whoever tried to work it. Luke had known then—and he hadn't told me, because he was afraid I might spill it to Tony. He had known; yet why had he let the act go on? Why hadn't he told Tom and Mary? Perhaps he had. I chilled with the thought. And perhaps they had refused to believe him. But just then Tom, white, shaking and limping, came forward.

"Do you mean?" he snapped, as he glared down at the white-faced, terror-stricken thing that had been a man, "that you knew this would happen? That you deliberately made yourself sick to give you an excuse to stay away, to——"

"Stop her!" It was all Jereau could say. "I didn't mean it for her. I thought——"

Just then a figure came out of the shadows and shot toward Tony Jereau. It was Luke Martin, and he caught the cringing being tight by the shoulders.

"Well," came shortly, "it happened!"

Jereau stared up at him with dull, dead eyes. Then, with a sudden return of energy, he tried to force his way out of the other man's grip.

"It's not time yet—she hasn't had time to work the other act."

"We started the act early," came in quiet tones from Luke. "It's over now. You meant to get Tom, didn't you? Well——"

"Don't—don't! I didn't think she'd ever go in there. I—figured that Tom would work the act. I—I—wanted Mary—for myself!"

A groan came from one side as a man reeled. It was Tom Mason, and, with a spring, Luke Martin caught him up in his arms and carried him to the steps. There he held him close and whispered to him a second, finally to raise his voice:

"Hey, canvas-men! Grab that snake and take him into his car. Tie him to the bunk if you have to, and break every bone in his body if he tries to make a getaway. Keep your brains clear on what he says. We'll need it if he tries to skin out of this."

They obeyed. For a moment I stood staring, gasping. Then, with a sudden impulse, I broke into a run, racing across tracks and vacant lots, rushing with every bit of speed I could force toward the circus lot and the little girl who'd been our kiddie, the little girl that Luke and me had carried in our arms the day after the big wreck, the little girl who now——

I reached the connection and ducked under it. I wheeled toward the big top, skirted the general-admission seats, then stopped short. The audience was cheering and applauding. In front of me was the big, steel arena, with a girl and a tiger within, the big striped beast rolling and playing as she mauled him about. Beside me——

"Plots may come and plots may go, but the show rolls on regardless," came quietly. It was Doc Jordan, and I guess he divined the question in my eyes, because he went on hurriedly: "Had to do some quick work with that tiger. It was crazy with craving for morphine. We tried to get Mary not to go into the ring—but she insisted on taking the chance. So there wasn't anything to do but to try to dope it up again. I sure had to pump in the drugs and pump 'em fast—and it wasn't any easy job, with that cat twisting out of every noose and catch-rope that we put on him. But it worked and—" He looked around hurriedly. "Wish Luke'd show up," came at last. "We were going down to the cars together to see if we couldn't work a little psychological stunt on this Jereau fellow and scare him into confessing to what we think he tried to pull off, but I was a few minutes late. Wonder if he's gone? I—" Then he stopped and stared. "Well, you old fool," he snorted, "what in thunder are you crying about?"

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The Gay Dog

Some of the Most Interesting Legal Tangles Never Get into Court—and There's Never Any Telling What Will Happen to an Unchained Man in a Flivver

By Arthur Crabb

IN THE spring, Johnny Porter entered into a contract with one Jacob Feldman to tear down and remove certain small, antiquated structures, to excavate the site thereof for a small apartment-house, and then to build the stone foundation-walls therefor. And Mr. Porter furthermore agreed to do the whole job in three months, barring strikes and a long list of other things beyond Mr. Porter's control. It took Mr. Porter three months and twelve days to do the work, and Mr. Feldman insisted on collecting from Mr. Porter three hundred dollars, the sum determined by twelve days multiplied by twenty-five dollars, the amount mentioned in the contract as a penalty. Mr. Porter disapproved of the idea emphatically and said so, and Mr. Feldman shrugged his shoulders and said that, a contract being a contract, the entire matter was in the hands of Max Solis, esquire, his lawyer.

Johnny, knowing Mr. Solis well, approached him on the subject and intimated that he would like his final payment for work done under the contract, and that he would like it quick, without the deduction of three hundred dollars. Mr. Solis stuck to the facts and the contract.

"Quit your kidding!" Johnny exclaimed. "Wasn't there a strike that lasted more than twelve days?"

"Maybe there was," Max retorted; "but if you can read you would know the contract says that in case of any delay beyond control whatsoever it would be incumbent upon you to advise the owner thereof in writin' not more than forty-eight hours from the beginnin' thereof; otherwise no extension of time would be granted. This you neglected to do."

"You and Feldman and everybody else knew there was a strike, didn't you?"

"Is a contract a contract or is it not?" Max demanded.

Johnny told Max to chase himself, and so the matter stood, unsettled, on a summer day. Johnny had no heart for sharp practise or for technicalities.

Late on that warm summer afternoon, Max Solis left his office, went down on the elevator and stood in the doorway of the building, regarding the world that was all his. For the first time in ten years Max was, for the purposes of the moment, a bachelor.

Across the street Max saw the great form of Johnny Porter, and he acted quickly. He dashed across the street and fell in behind his friend and enemy; he watched for a favorable chance and then bumped into Johnny.

"Maybe you need the whole sidewalk and not only half of it. Why don't you look where you're goin'?" Max exclaimed. Then he pretended to recognize Johnny for the first time. "So it's you—is it?—you big Irish bum! I might have known it in the first place. Pretty soon you'd get run in for reckless walkin' and speedin' on the sidewalk."

Porter's huge hand descended on Max's shoulder.

"Drunk again," he said sadly.

"Likely!" said Max. "Nowadays, if a feller would get drunk, he would get also blinded or broke. Nevertheless, I wouldn't mind gettin' drunk if I could do so at all reasonable. My wife's in the country."

"And you're the cute little village cut-up! Come home with me and I'll give you a square meal and keep you out of trouble for one night, anyway."

"Who wants to keep out of trouble? I'm lookin' for trouble. For the first time in ten years I got a chance to enjoy myself."

Again the mighty hand of Porter fell on Max's shoulder, grasping his coat firmly.

"Come on, you!" he said. "And come peaceful, or I'll beat you up."

"And Mrs. Porter would beat us both up when she sees what you brought home with you," Max said, grinning up at Johnny.

"Leave that to me—I think there's ham for supper, and maybe corn." The corn recalled an incident that had a tendency to make Max docile. "And I'll run you out home after supper and put you safe in bed. The missus'll enjoy the ride, and the city won't be painted red till to-morrow."

"I accept on condition no mention would be made of business," Max said.

"Do you think I'd call a guest a shyster lawyer in my own house? Come on—peaceful," Johnny retorted.

THEY reached and entered Johnny's car, parked under the watchful eye of a cop who accepted a quarter from Johnny, and in due course arrived at Johnny's house on Scott Street, where Mrs. Porter was in no wise disturbed at the unexpected arrival of a guest.

"So you're a bachelor?" she said, when the first formalities had been complied with.

"For the first time since I got married," Max answered. "Always either we would not go away in the summer-time at all, on account Mrs. Solis says there is no place like home, or else we go together to the shore for a couple weeks, now that the kids can eat anything like the rest of us. Only, this time Mrs. Solis's mother got a cottage at the shore and insists the family should spend at least a month with her at her expense, and Mrs. Solis says certainly she would go under the circumstances and I go myself there a week from Friday."

"Johnny's been trying to make me go away, but I won't," Mrs. Porter said. "I had too much trouble getting him to take a chance on losing him, now I've got him. I wouldn't trust any man alone in a big city with the restraining influence of home removed."

"He would be lonely—nothing more at the worst," Max said, "and would appreciate it all the more when he got a home again. It's a good thing all round a feller don't see his wife for a couple weeks once in a while. And speakin' about my wife reminds me of something, believe me, you never see anything would beat it. It happened like this: Last week I got a little business in Norristown with a feller; so I says to Rebecca we should take half a day off, and she goes with me. We're ridin' along on a road that's all right except now and then there's a big hole in it, and Rebecca says: 'Look at that pair o' old girls drivin' the flivver. Ain't it queer how everybody comes to it sooner or later?' I looks at them, and they're all fixed up in black silk and their best bonnets and white gloves and so forth, and lookin' serious, not to say severe, an' Rebecca says, 'I betcha they're goin' to a meetin' at the Methodis' church or somewhere.' And it looks like it, only you could see it would not be a synagogue they were on their way to.

"Well, anyway, I am so busy lookin' at them and listenin' to Rebecca I wouldn't see exactly where I am goin', and the front wheel goes into a hole at least one foot deep and the right shape, which, on account of a thunder-storm the night before, is full of water. I give you my word what happens makes Charlie Chaplin look sick. I would not believe it myself unless I see it with my own eyes. Can you imagine it a dozen buckets of water and mud like they was picked up and thrown straight at them dames? Charlie Chaplin could not do so good, no matter how much he faked it. But, even at that, I did not get a laugh out of it at once, on account of knowin' my wife and always how polite and considerate she is, and I make up my mind that at least I must turn round and go back and apologize, an I got a picture of them dames sayin' a few things and also takin' my number besides, with the idea of bringin' suit for a thousand dollars for one thing or another, and I am tryin' to remember does my insurance take care of plasterin' a pair of dames with mud from head to foot when I hears tears, and I see Rebecca like she got something awful the matter with her, and I slows down to see what it would be and she yells: 'Go on! Go on—or they catch you!' And I goes on all right, and if I was a liar I'd say the two dames in the flivver chased us to make the story better, but, as it is, we saw nothing more of them. Anyhow, I get my laugh all right maybe a mile after it happened."

MRS. PORTER rewarded Max with much laughter. Then she asked Max if his car was a success.

"Entirely like one of the family," Max said. "Once you get the hang of it, it is exactly like the baby-carriage would be not more than a few years ago. Even Rebecca she now drives it with no trouble whatever except she was slow learnin', and still she don't go over fifteen miles per hour when everything is favorable. And speakin' of new beginners, I tell you another story, absolutely true in every respect, but maybe I already told you enough stories for once."

"Go on; go on! Dinner won't be ready for a while yet," Johnny said.

"I've heard stories told even at dinner," Mrs. Porter suggested.

"I tell the story—that big feller can listen or read the paper as he likes. Mrs. Solis goes away last Monday, and Monday afternoon I go to see Mr. Samuel Flint, of Flint Brothers, on account he gets mixed up with Aronson, Goldblatt & Son. Goldblatt is a tricky feller all right, but I made a settlement and Mr. Flint was feelin' good and I told him for the first time in ten years I am a bachelor, and he says he is in the same boat and we would go out to the lake and drown our sorrows together at Riggio's place. He's got his limmysene waitin', with a little feller runnin' it, and we starts out; and pretty soon we're goin' along the boulevard slow when somethin' happens like a big feller gives us a kick from behind. We stops quick, and the little choffer jumps out and we looks round and the feller that's run into us is turnin' round to make a getaway, and the choffer runs after him and gets there no more than in time to jump up on the tire on behind, and Mr. Flint jumps into the front of the limmysene and starts her and turns round and goes after him, and pretty soon he catches up to the feller and pushes him into the gutter so either he must stop or have a smash-up. So he stops, and we get out, and the little choffer comes off the spare tire and says a few things, and Mr. Flint says a few things which I could not repeat to my own wife, and all the time the feller sits there holdin' on the wheel like he was froze to it an' sayin': 'Vell, vell! What's all the trouble?' And pretty soon Mr. Flint gets so that he can tell him what's the trouble, the feller runnin' into us and then tryin' to escape and he sets there sayin': 'Vell, vell! I pay; I pay.'

"Mr. Flint asks him his name, and he says it is Henry Brown, in which case I says my name would be Mike Murphy, and the feller says don't we believe him and I says one of us don't, and Mr. Flint says show us his card, but he don't have a card; and Mr. Flint says, 'Let's see your driver's license.' And he's got one, all right—only, I bet him a thousand dollars it ain't his but maybe a friend's, and Mr. Flint says take his number and we'll get him all right, especially the damage to the limmysene is nominal only and also as he has told us his address and says he's on his way home.

"So the feller turns round and starts off and we do the same, and pretty soon Mr. Flint says the feller is lyin' to us and I says what would he expect, and he looks at the address he gave us and says to the little choffer, 'Ain't it close by?' And the choffer says it would not be so far, and Mr. Flint says, 'Follow him for the fun of it.' So we followed him till we come to where the boulevard crosses Searles Avenue, and there's a cop there workin' one of these here windmills. And just as the feller gets there with us close behind him, the cop holds up his hand and swings the stop-signal on us and then yanks his fist at the feller goin' across the boulevard, and one of these trucks that looks like one of these here locmotives with a freight-car on top never stops but comes on across, havin' timed it just right, and believe me or not as you like, Henry Brown, whose name maybe would be Isaac Goldstein, does he stop when the cop tells him? Not so you'd notice it. Instead, he hurries up like he was showin' what he could do, and the cop yells at him, but it makes no difference except that Henry goes even faster yet and the big truck hits him and so quick you don't know hardly what's happened. Everything in front of his wind-shield reminds you of an ant you stepped on on the sidewalk, and, believe me or not, the feller is sittin' holdin' on to the steerin'-wheel lookin' round him like he'd just woke up and couldn't remember where he went to bed.

"I guess maybe that feller wouldn't be a new beginner to step on the gas instead of the brake at a time like that! Mr. Flint says he guesses he'll forget about his runnin' into us from behind on account he's got trouble enough as it is, and we goes on and that's the last we see of him. Only, believe me, you would of died laughin' to see Henry Isaac sittin' there like he was tryin' to steer, and his engine and front wheels and all like a buckwheat cake on the asphalt."

Mrs. Porter laughed—with reservations.

"It's all very well to make fun of him," she said, "but he was probably a perfectly nice man just learning to drive and he was frightened to death. I feel sorry for him."

"A perfectly nice man who looks like him and says his name is Henry Brown would tell the truth about nothing," Max insisted. "Once a liar, always a liar."

"I believe he was a perfectly nice man, just the same," Mrs. Porter insisted. "I remember how I felt when I drove alone the first time. I am sure you were the same."

"Certainly—why not? Only by a miracle I don't have a dozen smash-ups. I got an idea people knows a new beginner just by lookin' at his hind wheel and keeps out of his way. I see by the papers a feller says all new beginners should put a sign to that effect on their car, front and rear, so everybody would know what to expect."

"Have you been pinched yet?" Johnny asked.

"Once only, and it cost me a dollar on account of runnin' past a signal. The cops make me sick. They got laws enough and rules and regulations so that no feller can keep 'em all in his head at the same time, and they pinch a careful driver on account he makes an honest mistake, whereas any time you can see all sorts of fellers drivin' like they was crazy and nothing happens.

"Furthermore, with my own eyes I have seen fellers drivin' at night with girls practically sittin' in their lap, and sometimes singin' and yellin' without regard to where they are goin' until they have a smash-up and somebody gets seriously hurt if not killed.

"Every day practically in the papers is accounts how men and women knocks over a telegraph-pole or goes off a bridge or over a bank or gets run over by a train, and nine times out of ten they would not be husband and wife but instead a feller out having a good time and not knowin' where to stop instead of endin' in the hospital if not in the cemetery. It seems like a feller no sooner gets an automobile he thinks he must have a chicken to go with it, even sooner than a spare tire. Believe me, if a feller would use reasonable care only and not be a gay dog or always in a hurry, then a respectable man would be able to call his life his own. Only yesterday the papers say I don't know how many people are killed already in Alden this year on account of automobile accidents, and besides over ten thousand are injured, and certainly nine out of ten would not have occurred if only reasonable sense had been employed."

Dinner was ready, and Max took his views on joy and other forms of dangerous driving to the table with him. Later in the evening, Johnny delivered Max at his own door, as per contract and, as per agreement, no mention had been made of the matter of Feldman *vs.* Porter.

MRS. SOLIS had departed on Monday, leaving Max a bachelor free to do as he liked for the first time in ten years. It was a grand and glorious feeling. Every evening for ten years he had gone home to the bosom of his family, and for ten years he had been content, but now he could cut loose and have a swell time.

On Monday his swell time consisted of his drive and dinner with Samuel Flint; on Tuesday he went to the Millmont Country Club and had dinner informally with some friends, among whom was the widow Saltzman, whom he had always admired; on Wednesday evening Johnny Porter took care of him.

On Thursday he repaired again to the country club and found no especially congenial friends who had a place at their table for him. On Friday it seemed that every one in the world had departed for the week-end. On Saturday he was forced into a card-game and lost eleven dollars, which was depressing. On Sunday he played golf all day, and when that was done he was as lonely as a man can well be. Nothing seemed attractive; his house was a forlorn void.

He had an idea which for an hour was first pleasing and then terrifying, in turn. The idea was that he would take the widow Saltzman for a little drive. Finally he cast discretion to the winds, gathered together all his courage and telephoned the widow, making his voice as light and airy as he could. The idea appealed to the widow, and Max went for her and they drove off. Notwithstanding the fact that Mrs. Saltzman was an eminently respectable woman, Max was pleased when they reached the open country without meeting any acquaintances. All during the short evening he was assailed by conflicting emotions—one that he was being the devil of a fellow and having a fine time, and the other that he was doing Rebecca, his wife, dirt. Certainly Rebecca would not be joy-riding alone with a fellow at the shore. He eased his conscience by resolving that he would immediately write to Rebecca informing her of the incident—then, at least, she could not accuse him of deception. Max further eased his conscience by extolling to his companion the virtues of Rebecca and the antics of his children. The evening ended with no unusual or unpleasant incident; Mrs. Saltzman was a perfect lady, Mr. Solis a perfect gentleman.

On the following Monday evening Max dined sedately with a neighbor. On Tuesday he again spent a lonely evening at the club, consoling himself with the fact that only Wednesday and Thursday evenings remained, for on Friday afternoon he would depart in his automobile shoreward to his family for his vacation.

On Thursday morning, on Main Street, Johnny Porter came face to face with Mr. James Burke, a young man with whom Johnny was intimate and who was following a journalistic career. Jimmy was a reporter on the Alden *Times*.

Johnny and Jimmy passed the time of day, commented on the weather and various other conventional matters, and were about to go their ways when Jimmy said,

"Say, don't you know a fellow named Max Solis?"

"Sure I know him!" Johnny answered. "What's he been doing?"

"The usual," said the sophisticated Jimmy, "joy-riding with a couple of chickens while his wife's away and having a smash-up."

"Anybody hurt?"

"Nothing serious. Only, he'll have a lot of explaining to do to his wife."

"How is she going to know about it?"

"How would she know it? Don't she read the papers?"

"It's going to get in the papers, is it?"

"Sure it is!"

"What's the use of printing that sort of stuff?"

"Don't ask me," Jimmy said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Maybe publicity once in a while will keep other guys from making fools of themselves." It was none of Jimmy's funeral and, with that bit of philosophy, he departed, leaving Johnny in no amiable frame of mind.

So Max had been making a fool of himself, had he? He had, undoubtedly, and to have his folly spread before the eyes of Alden was no more than he deserved. Johnny thought of what Max had said about chickens and spare tires, and then Johnny thought of another aspect of the matter—to wit, Mrs. Solis and the three Solis children. If Max, the gay-dog bachelor, had made a fool of himself, it wouldn't help things any to have the fact spread broadcast and, coming to Mrs. Solis, cause that good woman great unhappiness and heartburning.

A JOKE was a joke, but this was too much of a good thing, and the big Irish heart of Johnny Porter revolted. Something had to be done about it, and it looked as though he was the one to do it. But what to do? Johnny thought fast and came to a quick conclusion. He went hotfoot to David White, influential citizen, advertiser and friend of Spear, editor of the *Times*. To Mr. White he told the story of Max's escapade and the imminent result thereof, and David White laughed at first and then saw it Johnny's way.

"Let's go and see Spear," White said, and they went. They told their story to him and made their request, and Spear laughed and said all right he'd cut the story for a friend, and he'd do more than that—he'd ask Major Walker, of the *News*, if he had the tale, to do the same thing. Major Walker did have it, and he, too, agreed to eliminate it from his paper.

In the mean time a copy of the story in proof came beneath Johnny's eye. He read it and had a brilliant idea. He appropriated the sheet and put it in his pocket. He had saved Max, his friend, and now for Max, his enemy, and Feldman.

The printed story was a little vague here and there, but it gave certain facts clearly enough, and made a lot of veiled suggestions which any reader could and would interpret quickly and in only one way. The story was this:

A car owned and driven by Max Solis, a lawyer, having offices in the Gray Building, and being married and living in Millmont, had run into a ditch just outside of Stockton. In the car at the time were, besides Solis, Abraham Schultz, also married—address, business and so forth given—Miss Sadie Cohen and Miss Bella Hess. Mr. Solis was unhurt; Schultz had been thrown from the car and his arm fractured; Miss Cohen and Miss Hess were badly shaken up and bruised, but after being treated at the Stockton Hospital, had gone to their homes. It was understood that the party had spent the evening at a resort on Green Lake and were returning at a high rate of speed after midnight when the accident happened. The car was badly damaged. All of the story was hedged about with the qualifying words: "It is said," or "It is reported," and similar libel-proof phrases.

"The poor little fool!" muttered Johnny on his way back to his office.

It was the same old story, two married men on the loose, two chickens, a dinner, gaiety and a wild ride in the dark, an accident and then pitiless publicity. It was the sort of thing Johnny thought that newspapers might well pass by of their own accord, but he knew that the newspapers seldom did pass such incidents by. If the tale had seen the light of day, thousands of readers would have chuckled joyously at the misconduct and misfortune of four people they had never heard of; others would have chuckled inwardly, rejoicing that Max Solis had made a fool of himself and had been caught, and some would have kidded the life out of Max. All this was of small importance compared with what Mrs. Solis would have thought of it.

But, with the story killed, the great idea emerged from Johnny's conflicting emotions, and again he was a man of action. He hastened to his office and telephoned Mr. Solis and found that gentleman in.

"I want to see you quick," Johnny said.

Max was in his finest professional mood.

"What would you like to see me about?" he asked.

"About the Feldman business and maybe a few other things," Johnny answered.

"As to the Feldman case, I would always be glad to see you in my office at any time," Max retorted.

"Have it your own way; but if you want my advice, you'll come round here—and come quick."

THEN Johnny took a chance; he hung up the receiver with a bang. Max, at the other end, was surprised and annoyed, not to say perturbed. Johnny's voice sounded as though Johnny was not to be trifled with, and Max decided at once that perhaps it wouldn't do any harm to find out what was biting the big Irishman. Discretion was sometimes the better part not only of valor but also of professional dignity. Accordingly, he set out immediately for Johnny's office, where he was greeted with,

"So here's the village cut-up, is it, our gay-dog bachelor?"

"Please to tell me what you are talkin' about!" Max exclaimed.

Johnny's answer was to toss Max the proof of the story of his escapade. Max read it and then gazed at Johnny in consternation.

"Where did you get this thing?" he asked.

"I happened to be in the *Times* office an hour ago, and my eye fell on it."

"You mean to say they would publish a thing like that in the newspaper?"

"Oh, no; certainly they wouldn't!" Johnny said sarcastically. "They set it up in print just for the fun of it."

"A bunch of crooks—nothing less!" cried Max angrily.

"Well, it's true, isn't it?" Whether it was true or not, wholly or in part, was now of small importance to Mr. Porter.

"True!" shouted Max. "Certainly you would believe everything you read in the papers!"

Such is the tendency of human beings, though they ought to know better. Johnny had believed the main statements and had made the conventional deductions and now, suddenly, he was a little ashamed of himself for having done so. But he was not going to confess.

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"Do you see me laughing?" he demanded.

"I suppose you think I was joy-ridin' with a couple of skirts," Max snapped.

"Were they good-lookers?" Johnny asked.

"Maybe they would be good-lookin'. Certainly they wouldn't be homely, at any rate."

"How about these new beginners running a car?"

"Be sensible. Certainly I can run a car as good as anybody."

"Were you tight?"

"On the contrary, I had not had a drop. Listen, and I tell you the story. On Wednesday I go to lunch and meet Abe Schultz, and he says I should sit down with him on account of his bein' alone, and we talk things over and he tells me his wife and family are away and I says the same, and he says it's lonely and why not couldn't we take dinner that evening together, and on account of business if for no other reason I see no objection."

"Did you know him well?" Johnny asked.

"I would not say that I knew him well except that he is a buyer for Greenbaum Brothers, who are clients, and in that way I got to know him. So I said we would go out to the club maybe in my car and have dinner, and he says he will meet me at five o'clock at the corner Willow and Wells Streets, where I have left it. At four o'clock I got business outside my office and do not go back again, and he turns up all right where my car is and says since he seen me he has a letter from his wife sayin' that her sister has a friend stayin' in town with her, and would he be pleased to take them out to dinner some night. Therefore he had telephoned his wife's sister at once, and the only night they could go would be that night on account of previous engagements."

"And you believed him?" Johnny said.

"Certainly I believed him. Why should I think he would lie about it?"

"And the idea was for you to take 'em out in the country in your car and buy the dinner."

"Maybe you think I would be a sucker; but I ask you can I throw the feller out of my car? Certainly I could do nothing of the sort, especially as he says he telephoned me at four-thirty, as soon as he had spoken with his wife's sister, to see if it was all right, and also him being practically a partner in Greenbaum's—besides having positively promised he would take them out to dinner that night."

"Had you ever met his wife or his wife's sister?"

"I told you I know Schultz only slightly in a business way, and he is not a member of our club."

"All right. Go on."

"We went to their house where they lived, and pretty soon Abe comes out with them."

"Dressed elegant?" said Johnny.

"Sure; and he introduces me to his wife's sister and the other one and the sister gets in the front seat with me and Abe pretty soon says if it is all the same to me we go to the Lake House instead of the club on account he was givin' the party; and we argued a minute and finally we go to the Lake House, and, believe it or not, we had nothing whatsoever to drink excepting only iced tea for the ladies and coffee, after which Abe's wife's sister says she was crazy we should go canoein' for maybe half an hour. It is a fine night, with a moon and all, and would you blame a couple women they should like to go canoein' when they spend the summer in Alden? Only, I am no sooner in the canoe when the feller who rents them says maybe I would prefer a rowboat on account it's more comfortable for the lady, which any one who ain't blind could see easy enough."

"Had you ever been in a canoe before?" Johnny asked.

"What would that have to do with it? Only, I promise you I don't get into one again till I learn to walk a tight rope first."

"You're not so far wrong, at that," Johnny said.

"I GOT a picture o' you sittin' in one of these here canoes—a swell chance the canoe would have! As I say, we go on the lake and, believe it or not as you like, we are there not one minute after ten o'clock, and take my word for it if a feller would pull any rough stuff with a dame he would not choose a rowboat to do it, especially when it got a hole in it somewhere so you got to keep off the floor as much as possible."

"You found that out when you tried it—is that it?"

"Nothing of the sort! Still, I am with Abe's wife's sister."

"'Abe's wife's sister' is good," Johnny suggested.

"Sometimes smart fellers like you is wiseheimers all right. Why would I think a respectable man like Abe Schultz would lie to me? Besides, would I call him a liar to his face when I can prove nothing, and him being a client so to speak? You make me sick, Irish!"

"All right; go on. What happened?"

"WE STARTED for home, and the ladies and Abe says I should not go so far as Alden but should leave them on the train at some place like Stockton, on account of the ride I would have by myself all alone back again."

"But with the wife's sister in the front seat, you couldn't see it, eh?"

"Certainly I would be gentleman enough to do nothing of the kind. Maybe you don't interrupt so much I get somewhere."

"To the ditch? Go to it!"

"Ditch!" Max's voice had scorn in it. "Listen! I am driving slowly, not over twenty miles per hour at most, on the road which runs close to the railroad. We go through Stockton and are close to Lanley when shootin' out of a hedge like he was crazy comes a feller drivin' a flivver. Nobody would stand a chance in the world gettin' out of his way, nothwithstanding he turns like a feller dancin' on his heel. He smashes into me at the runnin'-board close to the rear mud-guard, and from the noise he makes you'd think everybody is killed beyond a doubt, and then he bounces off and ends up hittin' the gutter and smashing a front wheel. Out from the car he jumps and looks around like a crazy man.

" 'Anybody hurt?' he says, and before anybody says a word, he makes a break and starts runnin' down the road, with me and Abe after him—only, we stand a chance like a snowball catchin' him on account he wouldn't be over eighteen, and we see him go round the corner by the Lanley station just as a train comes in goin' to Alden, and when we gets there he's on the train all right.

" 'Maybe he was stealin' the automobile,' Abe says, and then he sees he's got his hand cut on the back by glass from the feller's wind-shield and it's bleedin' pretty bad, and when we get back to the dames, Abe's wife's sister says he should go to the hospital and get it fixed at once, and if possible I should get them out of the crowd, a couple automobiles having stopped by that time and three or four fellers standing round. My runnin'-board only is broke and the mud-guard dented, but not to any extent, and on account of Abe's hand still bleedin' pretty bad, we went to the hospital, and in maybe a half-hour Abe gets fixed up all right, and we are just leavin' when a cop comes along.

"I tell him the exact truth, and he says I would wait round a while till he gets our names and all other information and sees who owns the other car and what he's got to say about it, and would we please to take him back where it happened, and when he gets there he looks at the car in the gutter and says it would belong to a feller named White and what kind of a feller was drivin' it, and we told him so far as possible, and he says he would be Eddie Smith, who worked for White. And the Irish dummy was standin' there wonderin' what to do next when up comes a big limmysene and out gets Eddie and a choffer and a lady in the back seat, stickin' her head out and sayin' is anybody hurt, and it turns out it would be Mrs. White herself, and she's terrible worried when she sees the bandage on Abe's hand and is thankful nothing worse happened.

"Eddie says it's his fault all right, and tells us Mr. White telephones from town he's forgot some papers he's takin' with him on a night train and for Eddie to meet him at the station in Alden in a hurry, and Eddie hops the flivver on account maybe he can't catch the last train which would get him there, and when he puts himself out of business, he thinks maybe he can get the train after all if he don't wait to talk it over. A feller like that would make a success of himself in business all right. He feels pretty bad about it, and Abe says, so far as he is concerned, bygones would be bygones, and Mrs. White says she makes good any damage and pays all other expenses and can she do anything for the ladies? And now you got the whole story, maybe you won't believe everything what you see in the papers hereafter like all other darn fools. I got a picture every feller I know givin' me the ha-ha from now on an' sayin', 'You're a gay dog, Max, and tough luck you got caught.' Believe me, it will be enough to make a feller sick, to say nothing of ashamed of his friends."

"Maybe you could get the papers to take it back," Johnny said.

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"A fat chance!" Max exclaimed disgustedly.

"Anyway, maybe they'd explain you were with Abe's wife's sister at the request of Abe's wife."

"You make me tired! I have told you Abe is not the kind o' feller would lie to you, and besides I went back to the house, and Mrs. Hess, who would be Abe's mother-in-law, is sittin' up, and she kisses Abe and says he's a good feller to take the girls out and how's Minnie—that's Abe's wife—and the children all before she sees Abe is hurt on account of being on the piazza where it's dark. Sometimes you try to be too smart, Irish, like the papers and all."

"What do you know about that?" Johnny sighed. "I'm disappointed in you, Max. I thought you had a little sporting-blood left in you."

"Sportin'-blood! What would I do with sportin'-blood with a wife like Rebecca and the kids and a business to take care of and all, to say nothing if a feller would have sportin'-blood in him these days he must also be willin' to pay at least a dollar a drink and take a chance getting pinched besides?" The thought of Rebecca brought a doleful expression to Max's face.

"Cheer up!" Johnny said. "Tell all the stiffs who try to kid you to go to blazes. They're as much jealous of you as anything."

"Sure I'll tell 'em to go to blazes! What would I care for them; but how would I tell Rebecca to go to blazes?"

"Maybe she won't know anything about it."

"Maybe she won't; only, with my own hands I order that paper sent to her every day while she is away, and I guess she can read as good as anybody."

"But she'll believe you when you tell her the truth."

"Certainly she would say she believes me—only, the papers is full of jokes about the stories fellers tell their wives, and she would always think maybe I was a gay dog and say nothing to me about it but just do a lot of thinkin'. A feller who knows anything about women knows that, and she would never be sure till she comes back home and I have Abe and his wife and his wife's sister out to dinner, and even then may be she'd be sorry I'm gettin' old so no other dame would look at me twice. In the mean time I got to spend two weeks not only with her but also with her mother on my unsupported word alone."

"Can't you sue the paper for libel?"

MAX looked at Johnny questioningly for a moment; then he picked up the printed story and read it again.

"Not a chance; not a chance," he muttered finally, "even if they would be a bunch of crooks." Then an expression of real deep-down sadness came on Max's face. "For myself, I don't care so much," he said, "that I stand easy enough, but on account of Rebecca——"

"Forget it," Johnny said. "Mrs. Solis will never hear a word of it except what you tell her."

Max did not understand, and he stared at Johnny uncomprehendingly.

"I don't get you," he said. "Certainly Rebecca can read."

"Certainly she can, but there won't be anything for her to read. The *Times* killed the story."

"You mean it would not be in the paper?" A smile, an uncertain, hesitating smile, came on Max's lips and his eyes shone.

"That's just what I mean. Jimmy Burke told me about it, and I went to David White and the both of us went to see Mr. Spear, of the *Times*. David White asked him to cut it out, and he did; and he got Major Walker, of the *News*, to do the same."

Max gazed steadfastly at Johnny. His lips trembled in spite of being squeezed close together, and there was an unnatural brightness in his eyes.

"You big Irish bum!" he said, and his voice was hardly more than a whisper.

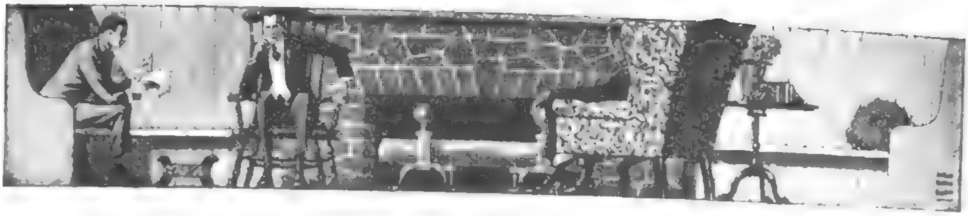
Johnny laughed, and even as he laughed, an expression of joy came on Max's face. Max, too, had an idea.

"You said you wished to speak to me about that Feldman matter," he said. "It is not necessary to say anything further on that subject. Feldman would act like a white man and forget that three hundred dollars or he would get another lawyer, and he would not get another lawyer so long as I know what I know about him."

"Thanks," said Johnny.

"You're very welcome, you big Irish, you! Have a cigar."

Johnny grinned; the big, if secondary, idea had gone over.



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

SOME may be inclined to condole with William Ashley Anderson, whose novel, "The Witch of Gondar" (page 55), begins in this issue, because he was in Abyssinia, apparently far away from the great story, in 1916. Then we thought excitement was to be found only in France and the eastern front. But even in Abyssinia every one was kept reasonably tense; in that year, the fate of northeast Africa was decided, and that struggle forms the background for "The Witch of Gondar."

I notice among authors nowadays [Mr. Anderson writes] an insistence upon the fact that their characters are drawn from real life. It seems to me that often enough such a confession may be in very bad taste. There are times, however, when the real thing is a story in itself transcending the power of an author's imagination. The year 1916 unfolded such a story in the mystic land of Abyssinia.

At that time I was in Aden, where I had sweltered for a year. An impulse led me up to the African shore at Djibouti, the *entrepôt* of French Somaliland and the independent inland empire of Abyssinia; from there to Harrar and then to the capital, Addis Abeba, on horseback. Two days after my arrival, I learned that a horde of about eighty thousand men was sweeping down from the north upon the capital.

I was not actually present at the great battle, upon the result of which the fate of northeast Africa (including Egypt) may have hung, but I was sufficiently near to tap some extraordinary sources of information, which, I believe, became part of the War Office record in London.

THERE are a few particular points, Mr. Anderson continues, that ought to be borne in mind by any one reading of Abyssinia.

To begin with, Abyssinia, which is the ancient Ethiopia, is not a negro country, and the Abyssinians, or Ethiopians, are not negroes, despite the firm-seated conviction, supported by literary testimony, that "Ethiopian" and "negro" are synonymous words.

It would be correct to say that certain negroes are Americans, but it would certainly be wrong to say that Americans are negroes. In a similar way, there are many negroes—even the most savage types—to be found in the empire of Abyssinia.

A pure Abyssinian, therefore, is of Caucasian extraction. Contact with black races and the system of slavery have made the people a dark-skinned race, ranging in color from alabaster to dark brown. They have their own ancient language and literature, the Amharic, an almost untouched treasure-house which is supposed to contain missing books that will supplant the Scriptures. They are Christians, belonging to a branch of the religion that antedates any in Europe north of Italy.

WHEN Wallace Irwin ("Daddy's Girl," page 29) was asked for some material about himself, he replied that we might fix up something about him as a mining-camp character.

When I was in Cripple Creek [he continued], the town was burned down, supposedly by incendiaries—and I rode forty-eight hours on a stretch as a deputy sheriff with instructions to shoot first and ask questions afterward. Acting on that sage advice, I almost killed a colonel of the Colorado National Guard. During all my life in the wild parts, I've only seen two deeds of violence. One was an old-fashioned barroom murder, and the other an attempt on the part of a Belgian pick-and-shovel man to kill a friend by rolling a boulder on his head. I worked in an assay office connected with a gold-reduction company, and once caused a day's boom in a sterile mining district by salting a mine. I failed to clean off the board where the sample was ground before being assayed, and, as a result, a lot of loose gold dust got mixed up with some rock which had lain for a million years, quite innocent of contact with the precious metal. For a few hours Cripple Creek thought it had discovered a bonanza—then the excitement subsided and I was turned out into the cold world.

Vance Thompson, whose great mystery story, "The Pointed Tower," begins in this issue, is one of the most versatile of American authors. As fiction-writer, dramatist, essayist, journalist, biographer and poet, he has a large amount of excellent work to his credit. His "French Portraits" stirred up things in the literary world a few years ago. "Diplomatic Mysteries" is remembered as a genuine thriller; while probably all of *Everybody's* readers have either read or heard of his book on dieting, "Eat and Grow Thin."

THE life story of Paul Annixter ("Amidon's Island," page 95) is not like that of the usual author.

He never was a reporter, never wrote verse and never wrote advertisements. His writing-bug was hatched at home, where this desire to write caused him to be looked upon as queer. All his relatives gave him up; he wasn't handicapped by overeducation, but he kept on writing.

One day back in 1915, a friend told me [he tells us] she was going to make a pilgrimage East to see a novelist, Will Levington Comfort. "I'll go with you," I said, and we went a month later. My friend stayed three months; I stayed three years. I learned from Mr. Comfort many pointers on the story game. I found a shack near by for ten dollars a month and began to write. That first year I made about one hundred dollars and, with the help of a couple of hundred I had saved up, managed to live. The following winter I found another shack for eight dollars a month. That year I made about two-hundred and fifty dollars. It was my fourth year in the game that I raised the ante to nineteen hundred and felt like a king. I felt so rich I bought me a house, and the next season a slump came and left me in a hole. I did pearl-diving and dish-washing and many other things to pull me through.

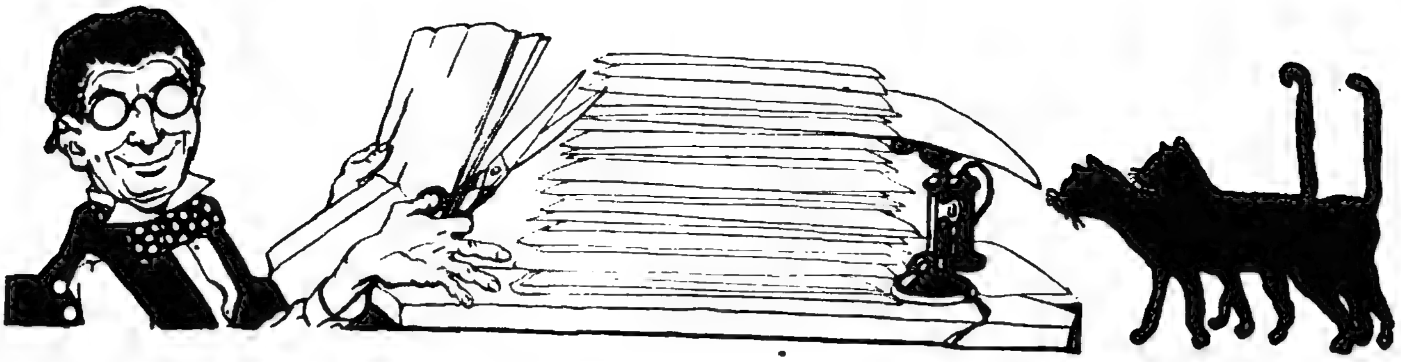
EVERY one has heard of Dana and Laffan of the *Sun* and the *Evening Sun* of New York. William C. McCloy author of "The Rise of Spotty Lafitte" (page 113), served under these two great newspaper figures as managing editor of the evening edition during its greatest success.

Although Spotty Lafitte isn't exactly his name [writes Mr. McCloy], it is near enough for Spotty to recognize it himself. Spotty and The Fixer used to be managers of the Horton Law Amateurs (prize-fighters), and made a few extra dollars furnishing news-tips to newspapers. The abolition of the Horton Law, the greater use of the telephone by the newspapers sent such men to the race-track as tipsters. As that peculiar industry became better organized, the free-lance tipsters found it difficult to compete, and Spotty, The Fixer and their kind, found slim pickings until the Volstead Law. They still flourish in the district between Park Row and New York Police Headquarters. If you run into one of them and ask him if he is working for Mr. Volstead, he will deny it, but if he is pressed he will "think he knows where a little may be found." The one thing that will impress you most is the facility with which such men make their vocation of beating the law conform to the changes in the laws. Cynical, callous, cunning, they seem to regard all laws with the tolerant and good-natured contempt of Dickens' "artful dodger."

ALTHOUGH "The Gay Dog" (page 164) bears the name "Arthur Crabb," that isn't the author's real one. The author is not an author at all, according to his own story; he is an engineer. Now let the engineer tell about the author:

Arthur Crabb was born in the spring of 1917. His mother was an associate editor of one of our thickest magazines; his father a lovable Irishman who wrote a column in a near-by newspaper; that is, he filled in the space Crabb didn't write for him gratuitously. The mother denied her son at the earliest possible moment, but the father, who'll stand for everything, still permits the boy to buy lunches for him. Before being born, Crabb graduated in 1902 from Harvard under an assumed name and rode in the crew, where he was designated by a number. Barrett Wendell told him that as a writer of English he was a fine Polish plumber. Therefore he became an engineer, according to his degree, which is a liar. The only first-class job he ever did was completed the day he got married, and his getting born eight years later complicated that. There was some question what to name him. His wife, having read his early work, refused to let her name be used in connection therewith, and has never regretted her decision. Neither do the neighbors blame her. She is an educated, refined, sensible, able, kind-hearted woman and won't permit her name and her children's to be dragged in the dust. Hence Arthur Crabb.

SEWELL HAGGARD.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

(Daytona, Fla., News)

Gettysburg—Frank Randall, inmate of the county home, has been notified that he has been left a large sum of money from the will of his dead wife.

It's the *will* of a live wife that keeps most of us guessing.

(Canton, Ohio, Repository)

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Karl Sisterhen, 819 Auburn Pl. N.W, a son.

Two guesses as to what they'll name that kid.

(Heading in Hartford Times)

CHILD OF EIGHT BITTEN BY DOG—EXPLANATION IS ANIMAL WAS "ANTAGONIZED"—ENTERTAINMENT BENEFITS CHURCH.

Probably will be able to raise the Pasteur's salary.

(Philadelphia Bulletin)

LOST—An undersized brown-and-white Boston Bull. Tail, 6 9/17 inches long. (G. F. C.)

Return the tail, and no questions will be asked.

(Bloomington, Ill., Bulletin)

Miss Mary McDonald wore a navy-blue suit and hat and carried pink shoes.

Paris via Illinois.

(Baltimore American)

Girls (2 or 3) to pack candy.

What! And get paid for it at the same time?

(Springfield Daily News)

Misses Bertha and Doris Miller, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Max Miller, of Morgan Street, will become the brides of Albert and John Levinson, of North Street, at a double marriage which will take place Sunday, February 15th. Arrangements have not been completed, but the two couples will be married by a rabbit. (MRS. C. S. O'R.)

Superstitious?

(Knoxville, Tenn., Journal & Tribune)

A bullet from a .38-caliber revolver passed through one of Seller's right hips and entered his abdomen.

Luckily it just missed both right hip-pockets.

(Albany, Wis., Vindicator)

Mrs. John Lewis entertained paper-hangers one day last week.

And those who received invitations were very much stuck up over it.

(O'Neill, Neb., Frontier)

At the week's end, little Willard Thompson was kicked in the forehead by a horse, which was tied where the youngster was playing. (C. C. J.)

Toys in the nursery.

(Baltimore American)

Men, while idle, learn barbering in eight weeks; tools furnished free.

Who'll be the first tool to take a chance?

(Mercer, Pa., Dispatch)

Poor Directors J. P. Griffith and George Crawford had a narrow escape from serious injury when a truck crowded their roadster off the road near Mercer, Monday afternoon. The car struck a telegraph-pole, breaking it off. The truck drove ahead about 100 years before stopping. (MISS J. B. B.)

Well, what did you expect?

(Decatur, Ill., Herald)

Although many Decatur persons have seen Warfield time and again, it just happens that he is not known to any of them personally. Edward Powers, who has seen him in nearly all of his better plays, and who knows more theatrical celebrities than any other Decatur person, has never met him. Mrs. Jeannette Powers Block of Peoria, a niece of Mr. Powers, has met Warfield a number of times.

Or, as *Steve* Decatur might have said, "Our Eddie, may he always be met; but met or un-met, our Eddie."

Copyright, 1922, by Gridley Adams.

(Hartford Times)

For Sale—Two evening dresses with slippers, $8. 5-1688.

Well, there ought to be enough material in the slippers at least to be worth that.

(Classified adv. in New York paper)

A Perfect Mansion—Seven-acre estate in Riverdale; nothing has been omitted; $300,000. Thomas S. Burke, Yonkers. (mrs. o. c. b.)

At that price they must include the cellar.

(Washington Evening Star)

A rare opportunity to buy a bargain in a skunk stole from a lady going South. Apt. 4, 1354 Monroe St. (after 6 p.m.) (miss a. w. s.)

Whew to the South! Let the thief go where he will.

(Baltimore American)

Experienced children's nurse; good pay.

Good-night, nurse!

(Hartford Times)

Wanted—Young lady, experienced, to work in confectionery and ice-cream parlor. Box 154, *Times*.

Experienced? Why, I thought they were all born that way.

(New Canaan, Conn., Advertiser)

34th Anniversary of the Great Blizzard

MANY REMEMBER THE MEMORIAL VISITATION OF THE FLUFFY ELEMENTS. (h.)

Right-o! Some of the pranks it played *were* certain killing.

(Head-line in Hartford Times)

Case Involving Dog Continued.

I thought there was a law limiting the length of a sausage?

(Chicago Tribune)

DENTISTS

Teeth-Cleaning—To-Day Only—$1.45. Regularly $3.00. No delivery. Union Dental Office, 334 S. Wabash Ave. (d. c. l.)

Gosh! Have I gotta go after them again?

(In an Overton, Neb., schoolroom)

"Willie, give some of the uses of the bones."

"To keep our insides in, and to protect the brain and other cavities." (miss v. h.)

Oh, what a gland and glorious feeling!

(Racine, Wis., Call)

Mr. and Mrs. F. Stanley Powles, of Milwaukee, are visiting on the parental roof in this village.

My regards to the storks, Stan.

(Washington Herald)

Mathilde McCormick, 17-year-old financee of Max Oser, etc.

I should say that's about Max's idea of it, too.

(Philadelphia Bulletin)

That afternoon the dead woman visited her home and said she would come back later.

Boy, get Conan Doyle on the 'phone—quick!

(Wausau, Wis., Record-Herald)

Wanted—General office position by young married man with five years' experience.

Oh, it doesn't take anywheres near that long.

(Adv. of Halsted St., Chicago, store)

Bringing within the reach of all the kind of merchandise usually enjoyed by the few.

And then he mentions "Men's Pants."

(Waterloo, Iowa, Courier)

Wanted—A man of education and refinement, but willing to work, wishes a position for the summer, preferably out of doors; best of references. Address K-21, care *Courier*. (f. e. l.)

If any one wants a mother's little helper round the house, here's your chance.

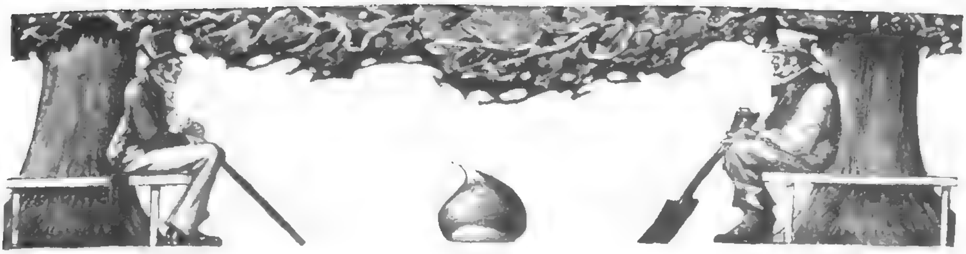
(Omaha News)

William Erath called on his sweetheart Friday night, but a minute after father came home, he was outside, his hat, coat and trousers were in bits everywhere, and he was suffering from a broken knee.

The following story was told to Police Captain Vanous by the father, Louis L. Raber:

"I noticed the dimly lighted parlor when I got home last night, and I stuck my head in to see who was there. It was my daughter and a man, who leaped from his chair and went by me like a shot when he saw me. We both made a grab for his hat, which hung on the hall tree, and the hat parted in two pieces. I then grabbed him by the coat collar and the coat parted, leaving a half of it in my hands. Mrs. Raber tripped him, and I pounced upon him and tried to hold him by the trousers, but again fate was against me, as the trousers tore and peeled off like a banana-skin. He escaped in his B. V. D.'s and tumbled down the steps. I don't know what was the matter with the boy. Just buck-fever, I guess. I wouldn't have hurt him. I just wanted to see who he was."

Sure! Merely wanted to kiss him good-night.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

GEORGE JONES, a British painter of mediocre talent and now quite forgotten, took great pride in a fancied likeness to the Duke of Wellington and tried in a degree to make up for the part. A friend who was telling the duke about it one day added that the resemblance must be very great because Jones was frequently addressed on the street as "Your Grace."

"Strange—very strange," muttered the conqueror of Napoleon. "Nobody ever addressed me as 'Mr. Jones.' "

AN EX-SOLDIER had turned bootlegger. Not far from the Canadian border some state police beheld a truck-load of booze. On the seat, hancuffed to the chauffeur, were two sad-faced-looking individuals. At once the state police conjectured the chauffeur was some prohibition officer who had captured the handcuffed gentlemen.

"Where did you make the haul?" asked the police.

"Up the road a ways," said the chauffeur.

"We captured half a load last night," said the police. "Will you put it on top of yours and take it to town?"

"Sure!" said the chauffeur.

And the police are still looking for the truck-load of booze.

"**MOSES** had indigestion, like you have, mother," announced small Elinor at the Sunday dinner-table.

"Why, what makes you think so?" questioned her astonished mother.

"Because our Sunday-school teacher said, 'God gave Moses two tablets'."

AT A Western post, a lieutenant, transferred from Texas, reported for duty. Upon his arrival, the commanding officer said:

"Mr. Bush, I have a letter from your former colonel. He tells me that you have one weakness, and that is for betting. You must cut that out in this regiment. I won't stand for it. Look at me; you couldn't hire me to make a wager now. What do you bet about, anyway?"

"I will bet on anything," said the youngster. "For example, Colonel, I'll bet you twenty-five dollars you have a wart on your left shoulder."

"What?" said the colonel. "I'll just take that bet." He pulled off his blouse and his top shirt and displayed a shoulder without a blemish. "There is no wart there," he said. "You lose; give me the money. I hope this will be a lesson for you."

Then he put on his shirt, buttoned up his blouse and dismissed the young officer. Whereupon he sat down and wrote a letter to the colonel in Texas.

> Just as you wrote me, this youngster wasn't in my office two minutes before he bet me twenty-five dollars that I had a wart on my left shoulder. Of course he lost. I hope it will be a lesson to him.

In a couple of weeks a reply came from San Antonio.

> The youngster wins. Before he left, he bet me one hundred dollars he would have your shirt off in five minutes after he met you.

"**HOW** do you find business these days?"

"Same way as always. By going out and looking for it."

A NEGRO who had an injured head entered a doctor's office.

"Hello, Sam! Got cut again, I see."

"Yes, sah. I done got carved up wid a razor."

"Why don't you keep out of bad company?" said the physician, after he had dressed the wound.

" 'Deed I'd like to; but I ain't got 'nuff money to git a divorce."

A YOUNG school-teacher had just arrived at the home of a country school-director where she was to board. The director desired to make his importance known.

"You probably seed my picher in this here county's paper, ain't you?" he began.

"I believe I have," replied the young woman. "I think you were among the political candidates, weren't you?"

"Naw; I been takin' Dr. Pain's Cure-all."

THE regiment returned to garrison after the summer maneuvers. Mrs. Coogan called on the chaplain and said:

"It's about time youse all came back. That boy of mine is almost old enough to enlist, and he isn't baptized yet."

"Bring him over this evening," said the chaplain, "and I will christen him."

When she appeared for the ceremony, the chaplain said to Mrs. Coogan,

"What do you wish to call the boy?"

She said,

"I talked it over with my husband, and we thought 'Robert Emmet' would be a fine name for him."

And so it happened the boy was christened "Robert Emmet Coogan." The mother handed the chaplain a two-dollar bill. He said,

"Keep it, Mrs. Coogan."

"No," said she; "I won't have it said in the regiment that the boy's name wasn't paid for. Take it."

Some weeks passed, and Mrs. Coogan again called on the chaplain. There was fire in her eye.

"What did I give you for the name of that boy?"

"Two dollars," he replied.

"I want it back," she said.

"What for?"

"Because you never told me Robert Emmet was a Protestant."

AN EYE-WITNESS to a crime, testifying at the trial, on being asked how far he stood from where the deed was done, answered promptly,

"Sixty-three feet, seven inches."

"But how," gasped the astonished attorney, "how can you pretend to any such accuracy?"

"Why," replied the unperturbed witness, "I thought some darn fool would ask me that question, so I measured it."

MABEL, aged six, had been making her mother's life a burden all morning, and finally the poor woman, having exhausted other pleas, told her that it made God very sad to see her so naughty. Presently it began to rain, and the child, looking mournfully out of the window, remarked,

"Mamma, if I'm good again, will God stop crying?"

A GOOD old lady said to her nephew, a poor preacher,

"James, why did you enter the ministry?"

"Because, aunt, I was called," he answered.

"James," said the old lady anxiously, "are you sure it wasn't some other noise you heard?"

MR. EICHENSTEIN returned home from his business and found his wife rocking the baby and singing, "By-low, baby, by-low; by-low, baby, by-low——"

"Dot's right, Sarah; you teach him to buy low, and I'll teach him to sell high."

TO A poor woman whose husband was in jail, a woman's-aid society gave some clothing and ten dollars in money.

A week after the gift had been made, a deputation of members called at the squalid home to see the results of their assistance. They found no improvement in the condition of the family.

"Well, Mrs. Downey," asked one of them, "how are you getting along?"

"Foine!" said Mrs. Downey.

"Did the clothes fit, and did you find a use for the money?"

"Sure the clothes fitted foine, an' the childer looked so nice in thim that I had all their pictures took wid the money ye gave me, an' I'm goin' to have me own took to send to the auld folks in Ireland."

Make Your Savings Grow

New U. S. Treasury Savings Certificates offer the soundest investment conceivable. A direct obligation of the government. Risk is eliminated.

THE Government now offers, through the Treasury and Post Office Departments, a new and attractive system of savings. It is being welcomed everywhere by men and women who seek the opportunity to save a share of their earnings—and make it earn while it is being saved.

At present prices these new Treasury Savings Certificates will earn 4½ per cent a year, compounded semi-annually, if held to maturity. Each matures five years from date of issue, earning 25 per cent for the full period of investment. The certificates may be redeemed at any time before maturity at redemption prices which increase from month to month.

There are numerous advantages to this new savings system. It will pay you to familiarize yourself with them. For here is liberal interest yield, absolute safety, ready cash if you need to withdraw.

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U. S. Treasury Savings Certificates are issued in denominations within the reach of all. You can now buy a $25 Certificate for $20, a $100 Certificate for $80 and a $1000 Certificate for $800.

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4½%
on Savings

Treasury Savings Certificates offer a liberal rate of interest. Each dollar saved earns at present prices 25 per cent in 5 years, which is at the rate of 4½ per cent a year, compounded semi-annually. If withdrawn before maturity you receive interest at the rate of 3½ per cent, compounded semi-annually.

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These Certificates are a direct obligation of your government, the soundest investment conceivable, backed by the strength of the Nation. Your principal and interest are absolutely safe. Certificates are registered in your name at time of purchase, protecting you against loss or theft.

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The Certificates are not subject to market fluctuations and cannot depreciate in value. They are always worth what you paid for them plus the interest.

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You can withdraw your money at any time, without waiting until maturity of the Certificates. This provides for any emergency.

Attractive Features

Some of the advantages are: Any individual can buy up to $5000 maturity value, of Treasury Savings Certificates of any one issue, and if desired can have them made payable to another person in case of death. The certificates are exempt from normal Federal Income Tax, and from state and local taxation (except estate and inheritance taxes). You can withdraw your money at any time with interest. The Government, however, cannot call them for payment before maturity.

These are but a few of the advantages. Become acquainted with this new and better way of saving, as thousands of other people are. Ask your postmaster for a descriptive circular or write direct to the U. S. Government Savings System, Treasury Department, Washington, D. C. You'll surely want to adopt this new way of saving, once you appreciate its advantages.

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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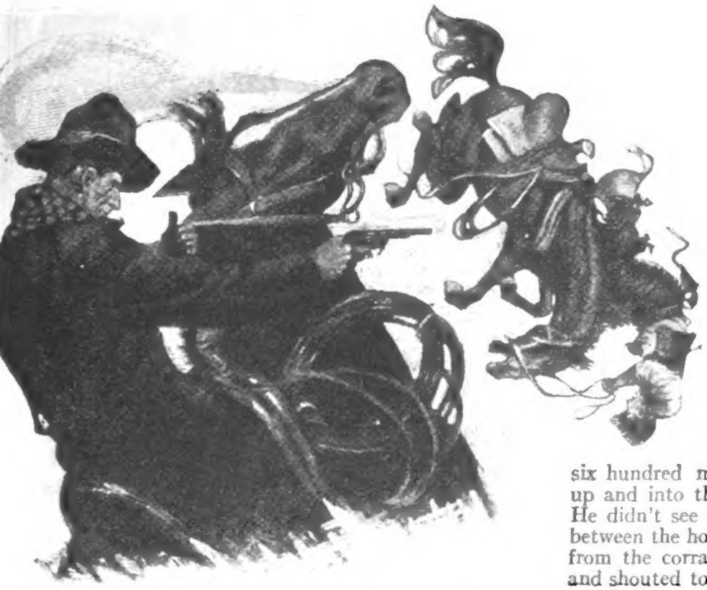

The First Killing

"Pedro vanished from the face of the earth. We gave up the chase for him. One day Chicken, a kid of eighteen, came back from the hills.

"'Get your horse,' he said. 'I know where Pedro is—Presidio County on the Rio Grande.'

"We left that night with four horses and fifty dollars. We rode six hundred miles. . . . Pedro came galloping up and into the corrals from the opposite side. He didn't see me. Like a flash I spurred in between the horses. They went wild and broke from the corral. Pedro turned, recognized me and shouted to the men. . . ."

"Through the Shadows with O. Henry"

By Al Jennings

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Here, in Al Jennings' own words, is one of the thrilling incidents in that true, unbelievably fascinating story.

As *Life* so well expresses it—"This book is a corker. It reeks with train robbery, horrible prison cruelty, pathos, sentiment—about everything there is in human nature, and then some. It is true. Naturally Al Jennings has made the most of his theme. Thomas Osborne, who ought to know, says that his account of prison horrors is even more gentle than the reality.

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Out of the trials and struggles of his own life, O. Henry wrote these stories of the people. He was one of the disinherited—and he knew their problems.

He picked out with deft, yet gentle hand, the little hidden things we all strive to conceal, held them up to the light of day, let the sun shine on them, and then tucked them back again—warmed and heartened, or cleansed and sterilized.

You love his stories because you see yourself in them—your real hidden self which no one else ever sees. Other men write so that you read and sagely nod your head and say—"That is so. This man writes of people such as I know." But O. Henry writes, and you read, and with sudden laughter cry—"*This is me!*"

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If I keep the books, I will remit $1.50 in 5 days, and then $1 a month for 15 months for the O. Henry set only, and keep the Jennings' volume FREE. Otherwise, I will, within 10 days, return both at your expense.

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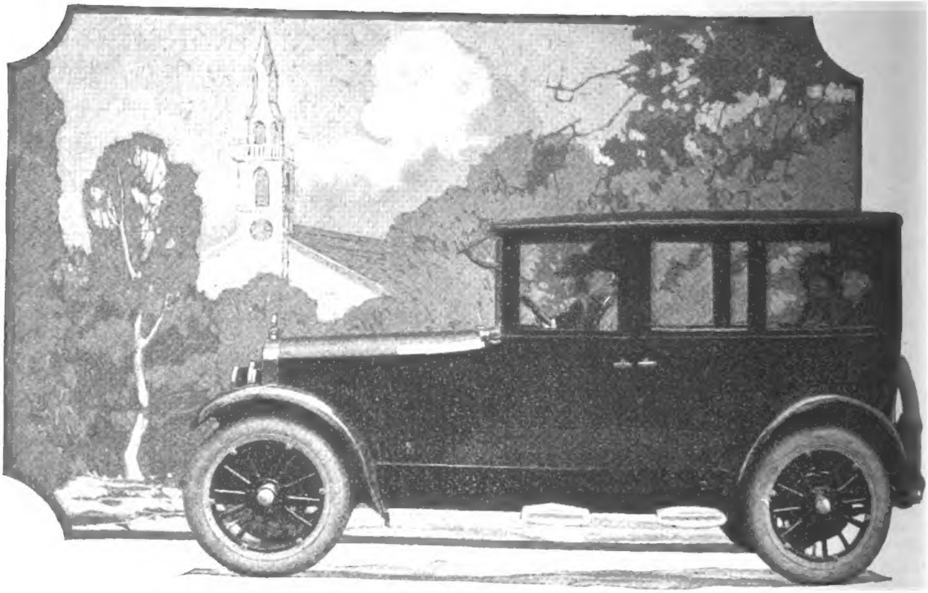
CLEVELAND SIX

THE WONDER CAR OF THE YEAR



Appeals Alike To Pride And Purse

THIS new Cleveland Six Sedan meets most completely both the thrift ideal and the demand for fine quality which are foremost in the minds of thinking Americans today.

Smart style, luxurious comfort, generous, responsive power are combined with strength and durability in this car. It is the lowest priced six cylinder sedan that has a Fisher-built body.

Touring Car . .	$1095
Roadster . . .	$1085
Five Passenger Sport	$1260
Coupe	$1495

All prices F. O. B. Cleveland

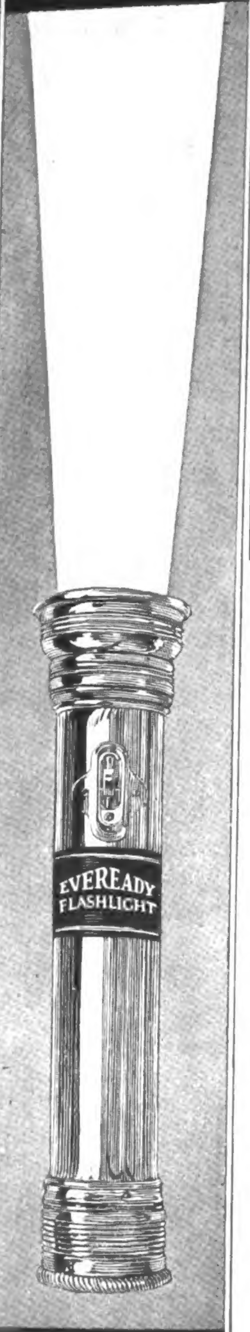
SEDAN

$1585

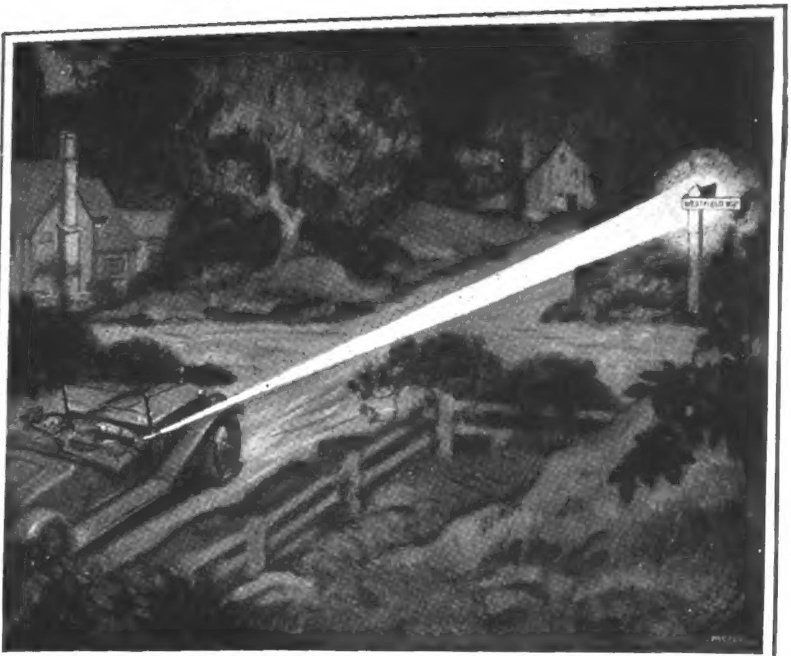
Today's Best Buy In Closed Cars.

CLEVELAND AUTOMOBILE CO., CLEVELAND
Export Dept: 1819 Broadway, New York City Cable Address, "Cleveauto"

Eveready Spotlight with the 300-ft. Range



There's an Eveready Flashlight complete for every purpose from $1.35 to $4



THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR AN EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT

A friend no motorist will leave behind!

The Eveready Spotlight shoots a 300-ft. electric beam to light up road signs and meet emergencies while motoring at night; *independent of the car and all other equipment!* .... The perfect portable light for vacationists: for motor boating, canoeing, rowing; flashing signals; going over to the dance; strolling down the road; a dozen uses a night.

MONEY-BACK OFFER

Try out this wonderful Eveready Spotlight. Buy one of any dealer for $3.75. Use it over night, flashing its 300-ft. beam near and far. If you want to return it next day, the dealer will refund your money without argument. (Frankly, you will keep it. No one wants to part with an Eveready Spotlight after trying it out.)

For sale everywhere at electrical, hardware, sporting goods, drug, and auto accessory shops; garages; general stores.

NO. 950
EVEREADY
FLASHLIGHT
BATTERY
UNIT CELL
NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY

Eveready Flashlight Batteries give brighter light; last longer; fit and improve all makes of flashlights

EVEREADY
FLASHLIGHTS & BATTERIES

STRONG-HEWAT
VIRGIN WOOL FABRICS

953-3

STRONG-HEWAT
VIRGIN WOOL FABRICS

951-1

HERE ARE Strong-Hewat Virgin Wool worsted suitings—sturdy and stylish, they tailor and fit well and satisfy in service.

This *Label*
STRONG-HEWAT
VIRGIN WOOL FABRICS

on finished *garment* is the guarantee of the fabric manufacturer (the only one who knows) of worth and worthiness of fabric.

Clothes can be no better than the cloth of which they are made.

CLOTH-SATISFACTION *is assured in clothes bearing the Strong-Hewat label. Sold by reliable retailers.*

STRONG, HEWAT & CO., *Inc.*
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VIRGIN • • WOOL • • FABRICS
WORSTEDS • AND • WOOLENS
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO